

Parental Expectations of Secondary School Counselors

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## Abstract

Despite much attention given to school counselors and their roles, minimal research has been conducted with regard to parental expectations of school counselors and no research exists in how expectancy theory relates to parental motivation. The primary purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore parental expectations of the secondary school counselor's roles and to gain an understanding of how expectancy theory influences parental motivation. The following questions were researched: What are the attitudes and general beliefs that parents have regarding expectations of school counselors? What do parents expect their children to gain from working with secondary school counselors? How do parents' prior interactions with school counselors impact their expectations? Is there a relationship between parental expectations and what advice/encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors?

The first phase consisted of a qualitative exploration of the expectations of secondary school counselors based on focus group interviews with fifteen parents. Qualitative results revealed that parents expect secondary school counselors to know and guide their child. In addition, parents expect their children to gain information and knowledge from their school counselor. Finally, it was determined that there was a relationship between what parents expect and the encouragement and advice parents gave their children about working with school counselors.

Themes that emerged from the focus groups were used in the development of the Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire (PESCQ) and to confirm the focus group findings. The PESCQ was administered to 450 parents of high school students in grades 9-12 at two SW

Virginia high schools. The survey did not detect significant findings between demographic variables but did confirm qualitative findings of parental expectations and child gains. Clearly, parents who had expectations expected their children to gain knowledge and information from their school counselors and those parents were motivated to encourage their children to work with their school counselor.

This study contributed to research on expectancy theory and analysis revealed that parents are motivated to work with counselors because they have shared values of wanting what is best for the child. This positive outcome equals a students' success. This research also provided implications for parents, school counselors, counselor educators, administrators, and school boards. Parents need to get to know their child's school counselor and become informed about their roles and functions. School counselors need to do their best to get to know their students and evaluate how they can motivate their parents to be more involved. Parents and school counselors share values of wanting the student to be successful. Since parents see the school counselor as a key to success and parents want to meet their child's needs this creates a motivation in working with the school counselor.

Dedication

To my special husband and best friend Tony and our four gifts from God:  
Alexis, Miranda, Alicia, and Simon

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Professional school counselors are called on to serve students, parents, teachers, administrators and other professionals in the community often simultaneously, and often with different expectations. Despite the efforts of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), there continues to be a great deal of confusion when attempting to define the role of school counselors. Boyer (1988) offered his description of the high school counselor:

“Today, in most high schools, counselors are not only expected to advise students about college, they are also asked to police for drugs, keep records of dropouts, reduce teenage pregnancy, check traffic in the halls, smooth out the tempers of irate parents, and give said and comfort to battered and neglected children. School counselors are expected to do what our communities, our homes, and our churches have not been able to accomplish, and if they cannot, we condemn them for failing to fulfill our high minded expectations.”

(p. 3)

Counselors struggle daily attempting to fulfill their actual role versus ideal role as well as the roles that other stakeholders expect.

Secondary school counselors play a vital and multifaceted role in schools. Students receive counseling on personal/social issues, academics, and career/vocational areas. Counselors are in a unique position to work with students since they have access to many domains of the student's life. However, counselors have limited opportunities to gain feedback or to communicate directly with parents about their roles or responsibilities.

Typically, the school system in which one works defines the basic role and function for most school counselors. At the same time, counselors may struggle, trying to come to peace with the actual role one performs versus the ideal role. Counselors have been trained to perform

counseling functions; however, due to roles being defined by others, counselors often find themselves performing roles and functions that include non-counseling related duties. Since various states are able to dictate additional roles such as coordinating and standardized testing, (e.g., Virginia Standards of Learning SOL's) variations in guidance and counseling responsibilities between school systems in various states will continue to occur. Consequently, when school counselors do not define their roles and responsibilities, stakeholders will. So it is imperative for school counseling roles to be clearly defined and expectations of stakeholders to be understood. Among these stakeholders are parents and we do not know what parents expect of secondary school counselors.

In order to understand stakeholder expectations it is important to have a basis for how expectations are formed. Expectations are originally formed through experiences; however, new experiences may change expectations. According to expectancy theory if people behave in a certain way or achieve a certain goal then they will be motivated to act in a certain manner to reach that goal (Vroom, 2006). Expectancy Theory consists of three main beliefs. The first belief is valence which refers to value a parent places on the reward. This is a function of the parents' needs, goals, and values. The second belief is instrumentality which refers to parents receiving what they desire. If as a parent, I work hard to establish a relationship with my child's school counselor, will my child receive more attention or receive more in school scholarships? The last belief is expectancy which is the parent's beliefs, expectations, and level of confidence about what the parent is doing. Parents who have the desire to satisfy a need, value, or goal will be motivated towards an outcome. Vroom (2006) suggests that individual beliefs about expectancy, instrumentality, and valence create motivational force. This motivational force is calculated by the formula:  $Motivation = Valence \times Expectancy \times Instrumentality$  (Vroom, 2006).

Based on expectancy theory, it appears that parents can be motivated to work with counselors through parent–counselor interaction particularly when the positive outcome equals their student’s success. Both parents and school counselors share values of what is important. Both want students to be successful both personally and academically which relates to valence. In addition, since instrumentality is related to parents obtaining what they desire, parents need to see the gain (outcome) of working with the school counselor. Gains can include collaboration with the school counselor promoting high school graduation, assistance with college admissions leading to college acceptance, more in depth understanding of testing scores, or referrals for outside assistance promoting students well being. Furthermore, when parents understand their own beliefs, expectations, and level of confidence, they will be motivated towards an outcome which will achieve their values. When school counselors understand parent expectations, then collaboration can begin about what parents would like to be able to do in the school environment, achieving their values.

In summary, by having an improved understanding of what parents expect, what they value, and what they would like to gain, a better working relationship between parents and school counselors will be likely. Better relationships will increase parent satisfaction and will encourage more parental involvement in understanding of the counselor’s role. By understanding expectancy theory, school counselors can create new experiences with parents which may change their expectations and improve the motivation for both the school counselor and parent to work together.

Most of the literature regarding the role and functions of school counselors seems to be based on perceptions of principals, teachers, administrators, and students. The description of school counseling is extremely broad and there tends to be discrepancies among various

individuals regarding the role of a school counselor (Partin, 1993). Counselors may have personally defined expectations about school counseling roles. Ghilani (2000) reflected that it is important to know and understand the views of others with whom counselors work such as teachers, administrators and parents. Through various searches of literature the reviews on what parents expect of school counselors is sparse and seems to be quantitatively focused. By including a qualitative component in this research, participants were allowed to provide in depth insight into the problem by having the opportunity to expand and explain their experiences.

The role of the school counselor is addressed by the American School Counselors Association National Standards through a comprehensive framework for school counseling programs. Secondary school counselors are professional educators who have knowledge of mental health and are able to respond to the difficulties that emerge from today's diverse student population (ASCA, 2006). School counselors provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of program services to help the student achieve success (ASCA, 2006).

As noted above, ASCA (2003) defines the professional school counselor as a licensed educator trained in school counseling who works with students. School counselors specialize in human behavior and relationships and provide interventions to students through four modalities: counseling (individual and group), large group guidance, consultation, and coordination.

Schools today face enormous pressures and demands. Schools are expected to compensate for the changes in society such as the increase in poverty, family transience, increase in violence, and changes in family structure (Amatea & Clark, 2005). All of these increase the numbers of at risk students and result in demands for more time from school counselors. School counselors can be more responsive to students by having knowledge of their expectations and

then adapting to them. Matching expectations can enhance satisfaction with the service provided and is likely to increase the impact of counselors' interventions (Harrington, 1993). By understanding expectancy theory and how parents arrive at and are motivated by their expectations of counselors, counselors can begin to understand and engage in those opportunities that may improve student success.

Role confusion has been well researched in the literature (Coll & Freedman, 1997, Coll & Rice, 1993, Partin 1993, Remley & Albright, 1988). The functions of the school counselor have been addressed along with the controversies between actual and ideal roles (Hogan, 1998, Robinson, 1998). Role confusion, actual and ideal roles, along with typical functions of a school counselor, are a universal concern. Counselors may be conflicted between what they were trained to do and what stakeholders expect. Administrators are concerned about ensuring academic success and are often torn between actual counselor roles and those administrative roles that are delegated to counselors out of administrative need. Other stakeholders such as parents and students have many needs and are concerned about unmet needs due to role demands and time constraints. Although different stakeholders have different opinions, there is consistency regarding the lack of clarity of counselor roles. There is limited research regarding parental expectations of school counselors (Fleishman-Hillard, 2005).

The literature available focuses mainly on perceptions from teachers, administrators, and counselors and is limited in the area of parental expectations especially with secondary school counselors. Since, next to the students themselves, parents are the most important stakeholder, it stands to reason that school counselors should know what parents expect. Studies about parents and education suggest that parents play an integral part in their child's education; therefore, by gaining knowledge of parent's expectations the school counselor can more effectively interact

with, consult with, and encourage parental involvement in the guidance program and educational process more broadly. Gaining insight into parents' perceptions of the school counseling area along with an understanding of what motivates those perceptions can assist school counselors and other stakeholders in further defining the role and function of secondary school counselors. This understanding will enable counselors to promote and provide the best guidance program to students. It will also bridge the gap between parents and counselors by creating awareness of parental expectations of school counselors.

Ultimately, the results from this research would encourage effective interaction and communication with parents and encourage greater parental involvement in comprehensive guidance programs. This study may also contribute to refining policies and priorities within school counseling programs to ensure that the parental expectations are met. Finally, this study will add to the limited research on parental expectations of secondary school counselors and the application of expectancy theory to parents.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this two- phase, mixed methods study was to explore parental expectations of secondary school counselor's roles and to gain an understanding of how expectancy theory influences parental expectations. Parental expectations are defined as work-related roles that parents perceive school counselors should perform. Expectancy theory maintains that people--parents-- have different sets of goals and expectations and can be motivated as long as three beliefs exist. The beliefs include a positive correlation between effort and performance, effort which results in a desirable reward that satisfies an important need, and a desire that leads to a positive outcome (Vroom, 2006).

When parents are motivated, enhanced collaboration between counselors and parents is possible and roles may be understood. Improved motivation on the part of school counselors and parents can increase student success. Motivation is just one of the factors that can contribute to the above and that was looked at in this study.

The first phase of this study was a qualitative exploration of the parents' expectations of secondary school counselors based on interviews with a purposeful sample of parents in focus groups in two different high schools in Southwest Virginia. Themes emerging from the group interviews guided the development of a questionnaire for the purpose of confirming the expectations of parents regarding school counselor roles. The second phase was a survey of 350 parents of currently enrolled high school students. The questionnaire confirmed through a wider population of high school parents what parents expect of secondary school counselors.

### Research Questions

This study was guided by the following broad research questions.

RQ1) What are the attitudes and general beliefs that parents have regarding expectations of school counselors?

RQ2) What do parents expect their children to gain from working with secondary school counselors?

RQ3) How do parents' prior interactions with school counselors impact their expectations?

RQ4) Is there a relationship between parental expectations and what advice/encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors about personal, academic, and career issues?

### Definition of Terms:

The following terms were relevant to this study:

**Secondary Students:** High school students in grades 9-12.

**Licensed Professional School Counselor:** A person who holds state certification as a licensed professional school counselor who provides academic, personal, and college/career counseling to high school students.

**American School Counselor Association (ASCA):** The national association dedicated to facilitating school counselor growth and development of a national model for all school counselors.

**National Standards:** Guidelines that enable school counselors, school and district administrators, faculty and staff, parents, counselor educators, businesses, communities and policy makers to provide effective school counseling programs for all students. These standards include the areas of academic, career, personal and social development (ASCA, 2006).

**Role and/or Function:** Services identified as being performed by high school counselors which include but are not limited to the ASCA guidelines for school counselors. These roles consist of counseling, consulting, and coordination.

**Parents:** Legal guardians.

**Parental Expectations:** Work related roles that parents perceive school counselors should perform.

**Expectancy Theory:** Individual goals that can be motivated when there is a positive correlation between effort and performance, desirable reward, and a strong need that the individual wants satisfied (Vroom, 2006).

**Motivation:** What guides our internal behavior (Green, 2002).

**Valence:** Emotional orientations people hold with respect to outcomes (Vroom, 2006). Valence is also known as the individual's personal values.

**Instrumentality:** Perception of whether an individual will obtain what they desire (Vroom, 2006).

**Expectancy:** Individual's beliefs, expectations, and level of confidence about what they are doing (Vroom, 2006).

**Perception:** Awareness or understanding through insight or observation.

### Limitations and Delimitations

This study was confined to public high schools in Southwestern Virginia. It only addresses parental expectations of secondary counselors at several high schools related specifically to the designed research questions. The findings of this study represent parental views; however, findings of this study should not be generalized to all parents of high school students. In addition, this research will not reach parents who do not participate in the one-day registration when the information was collected. We know that many things influence expectations. With this in mind, we also know that parent's perceptions and expectations of counselor roles may differ at various times and in various school districts.

### Summary

This chapter provided a foundation for the proposed research. The research has identified a gap in the literature related to school counselors and parental expectations. Literature has identified perceptions of school counselors generated by administrators, teachers, counselors, and students but minimal information regarding parental expectations on the secondary level. It is the purpose of this study to focus on the parents of secondary level students and explore and gain insight into their views of the roles of school counselors. The last section included the stated

purpose for the necessary research along with the major research questions that are being used for this study.

This study adds to an area of knowledge and understanding about school counselors from a group of individuals –parents--that have received limited study. To provide a thorough understanding for this research, the next chapter will review the literature related to this study with special attention to the perceptions and expectations of other stakeholders.

## Chapter II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter two presents a review of relevant literature pertaining to the stakeholders and their perceptions and or expectations of the role and functions of school counselors along with a description of Expectancy Theory. To better understand this, a variety of perceptions about school counselors' roles from counselors, administrators, teachers, students, and parents were reviewed. In addition, a model of how expectations are formed and applied was also reviewed for this study.

### *Expectancy Theory*

Hamachek (1995) stated that “if you treat people as if they were what they ought to be then you help them become what they are capable of being. One person’s expectations for another person’s behavior somehow come to be realized.” (p.65)

In order to bridge the gap between parents and school counselors, it is necessary to understand parental expectations and how they develop. The developer of Expectancy Theory, V.H. Vroom (1964) has proposed that individuals consciously choose behaviors based on perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. This model is also known as the VIE theory which stands for valence, instrumentality and expectancy (Mitchell and Mickel, 1999). Valence is referred to as what is valued by the individual. Instrumentality is the perception of whether individuals will obtain what they desire. Expectancy is the individuals’ beliefs, expectations and level of confidence about what they are doing (Vroom, 2006). Expectancy theory is a process theory of motivation and it focuses on personal perceptions and subsequent interactions as a consequence to individual expectations (Isaac, Zerbe,& Pitt, 2001). Motivation can be defined as what guides our internal behavior (Green, 2002). Furthermore, expectancy theory maintains that the degree of effort that individuals are willing to put forth is the amount to which they expect to succeed and

the degree to which the task is valued (Green, 2002). The model of expectancy suggests that people feel motivated when three main areas are perceived. First, personal effort results in a positive level of performance (How hard will I have to work?). Second, the achievement results in a specific outcome for the individual (What is the reward?). Third, the result is valued by the individual (How great is the reward?). Therefore, motivation is accomplished in the individual by the following formula:  $M = (EIV)$ . M = motivation, E = expectancy, I = instrumentality, V = valence (Vroom, 2006). In contrast, motivation will not exist if individuals do not perceive they can be successful at the task, don't believe that there will be a positive outcome, or that the outcome to the task will be negative. This theory is often used in the occupational area; however, for the purposes of this study the researcher applied the expectancy theory process to parents and counselors. Counselors know that parents have expectations but don't know what they are, how they are influenced, and what motivates those expectations. When counselors know the expectations of parents, they see opportunities to help the students that were not present before, and improve the counselors overall motivation. Likewise with parents, understanding more about counselor roles thereby bridging the gap, will increase their understanding of the instrumentality (receiving what parent desires) and may improve their motivation to work with the counselors toward student success.

### *Counselors' Perceptions:*

It is essential when looking at stakeholders' expectations of the counselor role, that we first have an understanding of counselor perceptions. According to Schmidt (1999), duties and expectations of secondary counselors continue to emerge. Role expectations appear to always be in a state of flux; however, having a thorough understanding of stakeholder expectations can assist the counselor with daily duties and functions. School counselors have different views

regarding their responsibilities and how to best use their skills and abilities (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). The ASCA model has defined historical problems in school counselor programs. These include lack of legitimization, consistent identity, involvement in reform, variation in counselor roles from state to state and non-counselor related duties (ASCA, 2006). The lack of clarity in the school counselor role has caused counselors to remain confused as to their actual role within the schools (Coll & Freeman, 1997). Literature on professional school counseling roles has identified three main areas: counseling, consulting and coordination (ASCA, 1990; Schmidt, 1999). Individual and group counseling should be provided by school counselors to assist students in learning (Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001). Consulting includes helping students to problem solve by encouraging them to interact effectively with others. Counselors may consult with students having difficulties and offer suggestions for improvement. Coordination is a service that assembles various services to assist students (Fitch et al., 2001). School counselors coordinate with various agencies to promote programs that are helpful to students.

Coll & Freedman (1997) conducted a study to understand the structure of role conflict and role ambiguity by using role questionnaires. Researchers found that there were three underlying factors of the questionnaire which were role ambiguity, incongruity, and role conflict. In this national study of high school counselors who were ASCA members, role ambiguity is considered to be confusion among school counselors regarding priorities of the job. Second, they found that role incongruity related to authority figures and the lack of resources needed to get the job done. Finally, they found that role conflict included role overload and having to work with stakeholder expectations (parents, administrators, teachers, etc).

One thing is clear from secondary counselors and that is how they want to spend their time. According to Schmidt, Weaver, & Aldredges' (2001) study, 45 newly hired counselors with less than 5 years of experience and 30 principals were surveyed in North Carolina to determine the counselors functioning and level of satisfaction with the counseling role. Of those 50% of the counselors surveyed results indicated that they spend a majority of their time in direct services, and the majority of counselors believed that they spent too much time doing non - counseling functions. Secondary counselors seemed to stress direct contact with students, personal one-on-one counseling to facilitate structured interventions, educational advisement, scheduling and placement, career guidance and orientation and registration. Less attention appears to be given to working with teachers or parents in reaching counseling goals.

Counselors continue to be concerned about providing and having the time to provide counseling. Partin (1990) found that over 40% of counselors' time is already devoted to individual or group counseling, though counselors would still prefer to spend a greater proportion of their time providing direct counseling services. In addition, she reports that high school counselors report spending 30% of their time providing individual counseling, almost half of that is in educational counseling which is likely related to their class scheduling duties. Partin's research showed that for secondary counselors, paperwork, scheduling, and administrative tasks are seen as significant time robbers which deter counselors from allotting more time to individual and group counseling. Partin's study included surveying counselors and administrators in Ohio. Those who participated in the survey were asked to estimate the time spent on nine different categories along with the ideal amount of time that should be spent on the counselor activity.

Coy (1999) noted that school counselors have the knowledge and ability to perform the necessary services but asking counselors to use their knowledge to make schedule changes and test is a misuse of their education. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century the counseling profession has strived to identify and clarify the role of school counselors (Baker, 2000, Schmidt, 1999). Fitch et al. (2001) concluded that many misperceptions toward the role of the school counselor still exist. Borders (2002) stated that it is critical for school counselors to recognize how stakeholders discuss the role and function of the profession so that the profession stays apprised of the school counselors' contributions. The American School Counselor Association model defines the roles for secondary school counselors. School counselors are uniquely qualified to help all students in the areas of academic achievement, personal/social development and career development. The goal for school counselors is to help students be productive, well adjusted adults (ASCA, 2006). Professional school counselors integrate programs to encourage student achievement. This is done by providing leadership, advocacy, and collaboration and by promoting equity and access to opportunities and experiences for all students (ASCA, 2006). School counselors meet the needs of students through prevention and interventions (ASCA, 2006).

Effective school counselors who want to meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders learn to plan for change by being flexible (Capuzzi & Gross, 2001). ASCA (2004) stresses the importance of building relationships and communicating with people who have different but important resources, and states that by understanding the various roles of others related to the school system, counselors can learn how to navigate the system.

Researchers have suggested repeatedly that counselors examine the congruence between what their programs actually do and how those outside the counseling profession view the evolving role (Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984; Valine, Higgins, & Hatcher, 1982) These

suggestions have been made for the school counselor to better define their own role as well as having insight into other stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of their responsibilities. The more knowledgeable school counselors are about their role, the better able they are to educate others about their services (Oyaziwo & Imonikhe, 2002).

Much of the current difficulty and confusion surrounding the school counselor's role stems from various expectations of stakeholders. Stakeholders' perceptions can force school counselors to perform duties that are not specifically stated in the role and function within schools or in ASCA guidelines (2002). School counselors must take an active and assertive role in communicating to their stakeholders how their time is being used and in preserving their most precious resource-time from further erosion by other non-related counseling activities (Partin, 1990). Based on counselor perceptions, it seems important to know more about other stakeholders' perspectives.

#### *Administrators' Perceptions:*

Perceptions and expectations of the school counselor are not always interpreted in the same way. Because the literature indicates that secondary school principals are significant determiners of the counselor role, it is critically important to understand how administrators view the secondary school counselor (Sparks, 2003). Administrators believe that today's schools face a unique set of demands and counselors should be adaptable (Amatea & Clark, 2005). In addition, counselors need to realize that many administrators base their understanding of school counseling on their prior work experiences personally when they were in school (Sparks, 2003).

Because of the different stakeholder views of the school counselor role, administrators are often left defining the role for the school counselor (Oyaziwo & Imonikhe, 2002). Even though administrators and counselors are able to agree upon most roles, considerable

disagreement occurs when the school counselors' role is defined as largely one of administrative support. According to Fitch, Newby, Ballesterro & Marshall (2001), future administrators rated discipline and record keeping as significant duties for the school counselor. Some principals expect counselors to be innovative leaders by not only working individually with students, teachers and parents, but by making things happen in the whole school. This occurs by gaining the perspectives of all stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, and administrators) and gaining the bigger picture of the needs of the school (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Principals tend to be concerned about the institution, the group, and the student body whereas counselors tend to be concerned about the needs and welfare of individual students. Administrators expect their counselors to work directly with students, provide classroom guidance, and consultation with parents and teachers (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Schmidt (1999) also found that there were differences between the perceptions and expectations of responsibilities and roles. Schmidt (1999) noted that these differences often lead to expectations and work that takes counselors away from their primary duties. Other administrators want counselors to take on more of a leadership role. One principal noted the following:

“I expect our school counselor to be an active member of our leadership team. She is an instructional leader in our school. I consult her not only when we have decisions to make about individual students, but also when we are shaping the program of services at our school. I expect her to give me input about how we are going to meet the needs of our school in our improvement plan.” (Amatea & Clark, 2005 p.22)

Furthermore, school counselors often perform duties that are unrelated to their role (ASCA, 1990). Duties such as scheduling, disciplinary actions, and clerical tasks often are assigned to the counselor due to administration needs (Fitch et al., 2001). As a consequence, many students do

not receive individual and group counseling or the guidance needed to address barriers to learning. ASCA provides clear role statements for professional school counselors, and most state education agencies base their role statements on these standards. Role definitions and expectations tend to be better understood when there is an agreement between school counselors and administrators. Without this agreement differences can often lead to conflict between the principal and counselor (Schmidt, 1999). When school counselors fail to clearly define the counselor's role school administrators and others may find it necessary to add their agenda to the school counseling program which often leads to confusion in the school counselor role (ASCA, 2006).

According to Sparks (2003) administrators want counselors to have time to work with students. Amatea & Clark (2005) noted that administrators expect the counselor to meet the needs of the whole child by helping both parents and teachers meet the academic and social emotional needs of the child. In one study by Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones (2004) a national survey was conducted with members from ASCA, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals Administrators. Participants were asked the extent to which professional school counselors should emphasize the National Standards for School Counseling Programs and the Transforming School Counseling Initiative. In addition, participants were asked about appropriate and inappropriate tasks for school counselors. The data revealed inconsistent agreement from school counselors and school principals about what appropriate and inappropriate roles are for school counselors. The data also showed that the tasks that were most highly endorsed by school principals were also the most frequently performed inappropriate tasks by school counselors (Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004). However, administrators have acknowledged

that school counselors are stretched in too many directions and have many expectations and demands that consume their time (Sparks, 2003). Furthermore, with successful collaboration administrators can define the role of a school counselor in ways that will impact the student with success. With this in mind, it is important to know the perceptions of another stakeholder, teachers who are paramount to student's education.

*Teachers' Perceptions:*

Within every school is another important group of stake holders, the teachers. Although teachers share the same commitment to student success, they are often overlooked as valuable resources to school counselors (Beesley, 2004). Few studies have been conducted regarding this group of professionals; however, authors have suggested that school counselors are perceived by teachers as a positive contribution to school programs (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002; Quarto, 1999). School counselors will continue to face the demands and expectations of stakeholders and it is apparent that counselors cannot bear this burden alone (Beesley, 2004). "Teachers and counselors, each working alone, can only accomplish so much, but when working together can accomplish a great deal more in a shorter amount of time" (Marlow, Bloss, & Bloss, 2000 p. 673).

A major role of the school counselor is to provide teacher consultation in order to help students achieve academic success (Clark & Amatea, 2004). Bemak (2000) found that teacher collaboration is essential in providing the best services for students in their personal, academic, and social development. Clark & Amatea (2004) conducted a study based on teacher perceptions and expectations of school counselors. The study examined 23 teachers regarding pertinent counseling services and how those services should be delivered. In addition the study looked at teachers' expectations of school counselors along with the teacher and school counselor relationships. This research concluded that three primary themes emerged from interviews with

teachers. The first theme that emerged most frequently focused on communication and collaboration between school counselors and teachers. Teachers stated that having a strong relationship with counselors was paramount to an effective school. Another major theme included small group counseling along with classroom guidance. Teachers want counselor support in their classrooms related to problem solving and decision making (Clark & Amatea, 2004). The final theme that emerged was the importance of counselor visibility and school wide involvement. Teachers expressed that counselors should be a significant part of the school team and should be available and approachable. One interview participant summed up a school counselor by stating,

“A great counselor is one who addresses the needs of the students and teachers by going out into the school and experiencing it as it is. For example, being in the classroom, lunchroom, and other areas sometimes avoided is a good idea. The counselor needs to be visible to teachers as well, such as in team meetings. She should keep lines of communication open between teachers, parents, and students and provide an atmosphere that is favorable to all.” (p.137)

Teachers can be instrumental in assisting counselors in this process since they are in a position to provide accurate and meaningful feedback on school counselor effectiveness with various roles and functions.

According to Beesley's (2004) study, K-12 teachers across the Southwest were surveyed to assess the perceptions of the effectiveness of school counseling services in their particular educational setting. Results concluded that teachers are satisfied with services provided by school counselors and report strengths in the areas of individual counseling, classroom guidance, consultation and coordination of special education services. Beesley (2004) noted that the role of the school counselor will continue to be redefined and increase in depth.

Beesley makes the following recommendations: 1) development of collaboration models to encourage counselors and teachers to work together as a team 2) educating stakeholders about the role of school counselors 3) complete a needs assessment per school or district to understand perceptions 4) provide programs to address the findings of assessment and 5) continue to evaluate stakeholders perceptions and expectations and refine programs. School counselors and teachers share something in common and that is both are familiar with the inner workings of school systems. Teachers can play a key role in implementing a successful guidance program; however, it begins with the school counselor fostering positive relationships within the school.

Beesley (2004) reports teachers share the same commitment to student success and are in a unique position to provide insight and meaningful feedback to school counselors on how to maximize counseling services. As the demands and expectations for school counseling programs increase, it is obvious that counselors cannot carry the full responsibility of providing comprehensive guidance services alone. Since the goal of guidance and counseling is to enhance students' personal, social, vocational, and academic achievement, teachers must be utilized as an integral part of the guidance process. Teachers and counselors serve the same student population within a school, yet have very little contact with one another at times. Recent research on this problem through a survey of 500 school counselors and teachers reveals that teachers define perceived barriers to collaboration with counselors as inadequate amounts of time, lack of priority, and an increase in workload (Marlow, Bloss, & Bloss, 2000). The survey asked participants to respond to the degree to which aspects of their job caused barriers to collaboration between teachers and counselors (Marlow, Bloss, & Bloss, 2000). It seems imperative that teachers and counselors should have a working knowledge of each others roles in order to effectively provide services to students and parents.

Quarto (1999) recommended informally educating teachers on the individual strengths possessed by the counselor to assist with more positive perceptions. “Counseling by nature is built on the principles of teamwork” (Lenhardt & Young, 2001, p. 193). Thus, it seems important to ensure that teachers have a thorough understanding of the school counselor role.

*Students’ Perceptions:*

The most important stakeholders in the school system are the students themselves. Adolescents can be a challenging population to work with; therefore, having an understanding of the students’ perceptions can assist school counselors with their current school programs and with the overall student connection. Assessments of student perceptions and expectations related to school counselor’s role are infrequent. However, according to one researcher high school students perceive some counselors as performing necessary functions or services and believe that school counselors do this at above average levels (Ghiliani, 2000). Furthermore, previously counselors were viewed to be helpful by students only in educational and vocational areas. Lindsey & Kalafat (1998) indicated that adolescents have identified characteristics of those adults from whom they would seek help. Those include: active problem solvers, effective listeners, empathetic, familiar, genuine, knowledgeable, available, nonjudgmental, projects a professional image, relates to teens, and trustworthy (Lindsey & Kalafat, 1998). Literature supports that adolescents tend to turn to peers before turning to professional helpers for their personal concerns (Adelman, Barker, & Nelson 1993; Lindsey & Kalafat 1998; Saunders, Resnick, Hoberman & Blum, 1994). Desirable characteristics for counselors, as viewed by students that emerged the most frequently were those who were empathetic and genuine. 50% of the adolescents stated that empathetic adults and adults who had experienced similar problems were desirable characteristics for counselors or adult helpers. (Lindsey & Kalafat, 1998). The other characteristic that was expressed 50% or more of the time was that of being available.

Students expressed that adult helpers should not only offer to help, but be available when the need arises (Lindsey & Kalafat, 1998). The study consisted of 30 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who participated in a focus group that gathered information on characteristics of school based adults whom the adolescent would turn to for help with a personal concern. The study also looked at barriers that the adolescents perceived in seeking help from adult helpers. The study also revealed that negative characteristics and barriers for students who need help include: negativity, judgmental, being psychologically unavailable, unable to relate to adolescents, too busy, and breaks confidentiality (Lindsey & Kalafat, 1998). Students expanded on this by stating that it is difficult to go to teachers or counselors in a confidential manner especially when the adult helpers are in an evaluative or disciplinary role.

Munson's (1991) research stated that students prefer adults who appear calm and confident and that are able to handle their own situations. It appears that adolescents see this type of counselor or adult behavior as a source of strength. In Millar & Brotherton's (2001) study of 51 career guidance interviews of students, the study examined differences in the perceptions of initial career guidance interviews expressed by students. The researchers found that student satisfaction with career guidance was related to the interpersonal action between the counselor and student rather than the tasks associated with providing the career guidance.

Those interactions that were rated by students with overall satisfaction were comprised of self disclosure, and being well known and understood by their counselor (Millar & Brotherton, 2001). In addition, the students commented on satisfaction relating directly to feeling involved in the actual process with the counselor. An additional study by Corwin, Venegas, Oliverez, & Colyar (2004) focused on education equity with students of low socioeconomic status and income. Corwin et al. (2004) concluded that the most profound finding was that constraints such as time and counselor caseloads significantly affected students' perceptions of the role of school

counselors. Gandara (2002) expressed that the minority student population has a general fear and distrust that counselors will not understand their needs relating to vocations. The researcher believes that this could contribute negatively to the role in the student's academic goals and in college aspirations. It is important to keep these in mind since the goal of school counselors is to promote well being and academic success. With that context, let's focus on parents, who next to students are the most important stakeholders.

#### *Parents' Perceptions:*

Parents are an integral part of their children's life, well being, and success in the academic environment; however, it is unclear what parents expect of secondary school counselors. It has long been recognized that the family is the single most influential factor on children's personality development (Samis, 1993). Giles (2005) confirms that there is a substantial body of research which documents the contribution of strong, trusting relationships between professional educators and parents to the success of initiatives to improve urban schools and increase student achievement. Amatea, Daniels, Bringman, & Vandiver (2004) stated that research has demonstrated that families appear to be the determining factor in whether a child succeeds in gaining an education. With all of this in mind, it is apparent that parents are concerned about their children in the educational environment and have high aspirations about their child's academic progress.

In order to promote parent counselor relationships, parents need to have a thorough understanding of counselor role and functions. In addition, counselors need to have the same understanding of the parents' expectations. Minimal research on this exists and this is often an area which can be misunderstood. Giles (2005) noted that parents' perceptions of the role they play in a school is a function of how they are treated. Roles and expectations are shaped through a gradual process in one's everyday interactions with educators (Giles, 2005). According to one

study, parents want the school counselor to be highly active in communicating and providing services, support, education, and information (Paulson & Edwards, 1997). Parents have expectations of a counselor as both a consultant and communicator and they stress the critical need for bringing together school personnel and parents to resolve student concerns.

In regard to college advising, parents held a low opinion of the effectiveness of school counselors. At the same time, parents underestimated the amount of contact their child had with the counselor, failed to recognize fully the counselor's role in initiating that contact, and frequently misjudged the purpose of the contact. Chapman's (1991) study included surveying 1,000 full time students and 1,000 independent parents of students who were applicants for aid in the state of New York. Students were asked to complete the student survey on high school guidance counseling and parents were asked to complete the parent survey on high school guidance counseling. The study gathered information on services received by school counselors, parent and student satisfaction, and counselor effectiveness. Results suggested that the parents' perceptions of counselor effectiveness in college advising may not be based on an accurate assessment of the student-counselor interaction (Chapman, Demasi & O'Brien, 1991).

According to Giles (2005) both educators and parents hold each other accountable for the education of students. By having strong, trusting relationships, across race and class, both can address problems that occur with students in school. One parent describes a good experience of a parent conference and their expectations:

“Parent conferences were not viewed as a time for teachers to report to parents about a child's academic progress, but as a way for the important adults in a child's life to share not only academic information, but also social and emotional information. Expert status was understood not as the sole purview of school staff but as something shared with and encouraged in parents” (Lewis & Forman, 2002, pp. 77-78).

Parent involvement at the high school level can be unusually low for low socioeconomic status students and parents of particular cultures (George & Aronson, 2003). This may be due to parents feeling that they are not needed or due to lack of opportunities. However, barriers that can prevent parent involvement include lack of confidence, a misunderstanding of the educational system or simply not being invited to participate (George & Aronson, 2003). Other barriers include belief systems that emanate from our culture because they shape the way individuals think, live, act, and interact with each other and with those outside their own culture (George & Aronson, 2003).

Expectations can reflect values and perspectives and at the same time can close our minds to accepting other ways of thinking and doing (McQuillan, 1998). Expectations are derived from personal beliefs that are deep-seated as part of one's individual and cultural experiences (George & Aronson, 2003). All of this needs to be taken into consideration, when counselors are trying to determine what expectations are or how they were arrived at.

In some places parent involvement in school decision-making is being mandated through parent advisory councils (Alberta Education, 1995). Borders and Drury (1992) contended that special effort should be given to increasing parents' involvement in the development of the counseling program because parents continue to be the single strongest influence on their children. Giles (2005) recommends developing collaborative relationships by having a space where parents and educators can share hopes and concerns with each other about the school and identify issues that they would like to take action on together. This can include individual meetings or small groups facilitated by the school counselor. By providing these opportunities, parents can take on more active roles where they can bring their knowledge and strengths to improving students' academic achievement and social and emotional development (Giles, 2005).

Educators expect parents to bring knowledge and strengths to improving the school, and parents expect educators to do the same. This review further substantiates the need to gain parental insight to what parents expect of secondary school counselors.

### Summary

Parents who have children in SW Virginia schools are educated in a variety of ways. School systems provide written information about counselor duties and responsibilities at the beginning of each school year to parents. In addition, high schools also hold orientations as well as new student orientations which not only address academic programs but explain roles and duties of school counselors along with the encouragement and importance of parent involvement. Secondary school counselors provide sessions throughout the school year to parents on a multitude of topics from freshman transition in high school to navigating the college process. Counselors are making efforts to inform parents and other stakeholders; however, in order to do this effectively the parent piece is essential in understanding and having a thorough knowledge of the expectations that parents have of secondary school counselors.

School counselors face many demands from various stakeholders. It is clear that counselors' roles lack clarity. Through the literature review, it has been clearly noted that different stakeholders have different opinions. There are many stakeholders in education; however, next to the students themselves, parents are the most important. Literature on school counselors focused on perceptions; however, limited research has been done in the understanding of what parents expect of secondary school counselors.

## CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the methodology for the research regarding parental expectations of secondary school counselors. It provided an overview of the research questions, data collection procedures and the statistical techniques implemented to analyze data.

### Introduction

The purpose of this two phase, sequential mixed methods study was to explore parental expectations of secondary school counselors' roles and to gain an understanding of how expectancy theory influences parental expectations. The first step was to interview two parent focus groups whose members were identified by administration and/or the parent teacher organization of the school. The emerging themes from the focus groups were analyzed to determine what parents expect of secondary school counselors and what motivated those expectations. Based on those themes, the researcher constructed a questionnaire which was given to 350 parents during one day registration on January 31, 2006, at two high schools in Southwestern Virginia. The Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire (PESCQ) was developed after the preliminary qualitative exploration of parents in focus groups. In addition, this study compared themes collected from focus group interviews to data collected from the PESCQ. By combining both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis, a better understanding of what parents expect of school counselors was gained.

### Research Questions

Through the use of the focus groups and the PESCQ this study addressed the following questions:

RQ1) What are the attitudes and general beliefs that parents have regarding expectations of school counselors?

RQ2) What do parents expect their children to gain from working with secondary school counselors?

RQ3) How do parents' interactions with school counselors impact their expectations?

RQ4) Is there a relationship between parental expectations and what advice/encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors about personal, academic, and career issues?

### Permission to Research

The researcher submitted the research proposal for the present study to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Tech. The IRB was for the focus groups and a waiver for informed consent was requested for the PESQC. In addition, a proposal was submitted to the guidance coordinator and/or administrative principal from the involved Southwest Virginia school districts informing them of the purpose, research questions, and procedures of this study. In addition, approval was gained through the Assistant Superintendent of the school system where the PESQC was administered. Furthermore, the researcher obtained a signed informed consent form from each subject to participate in the focus group and to use their information in this study (see Appendix A). Each focus group interview was audio recorded and transcribed.

### Participants

Participants in this study were parents of students currently enrolled in a secondary high school (grades 9-12) in two public school districts in Southwestern Virginia. For the qualitative portion, parents were purposefully sampled from the grade levels 9 – 12. In addition, the researcher made efforts to have parents of students who were involved in a variety of experiences such as athletics, extracurricular activities, Governor School, special education/504

program, had other children who were currently in high school or who have completed high school.

Access to these parents was gained through the administrator and/or parent teacher organization for the school. Initial contact was made by an administrator and/or researcher to encourage participation in this study (Appendix D). Prior to the focus groups, the researcher selected four parents to participate in the pilot interviews. After thorough review of the questions and reflection on information gleaned, adjustments were made and the two parent focus groups were interviewed.

Before the focus group began, parents were given an index card. The researcher shared with the parents that the purpose of the index card was to write down any additional information the parent may want to share relating to the focus group of parental expectations. In addition, the parents were told that they could request additional time with the researcher individually to expand on the topic or to debrief. Index cards were collected at the end of the group. Parents were also provided with a handout that consisted of a list of secondary school counselor roles and functions. This information was obtained from the American School Counselor Association website. This handout was provided to the focus group participants prior to the start of the group as a reference tool only and to give them the opportunity to look at ASCA standards regarding the role and function of school counselors.

The next group included surveying 450 parents. Parents were asked to complete the Parental Expectation/School Counselor Questionnaire (PESCQ). The researcher made contact with the counseling coordinator and/or administrator for permission to distribute the (PESCQ) during the one day registration process at local high schools. Grade levels of the students' parents taking the questionnaire were delineated through demographic questions. A brief summary of the findings from the completed study was offered to the participating districts.

Figure 1 below lists the four research questions along with the sample used, the data collection technique, and the interview questions for each research question.

Figure 1:

*Research Questions, Sample, & Data Collection Techniques for Focus Group Interviews and Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire*

	Phenomenon	Sample	Data Collection Technique	Interview Questions
RQ 1:	Parental attitudes/beliefs that effect parental expectations	2 groups of parents  450 Parents	Group Interviews  Parental Expectation School Questionnaire	As you reflect about the job of a high school counselor, what roles and responsibilities do you think the school counselor should perform? Specifically, of those roles and responsibilities you mentioned, which do you value most as a parent? Which do you value the least? What do you believe are the values that both you and the school counselor share regarding your son or daughter? What tasks do you think high school counselors actually perform? Are they asked to do too much? Too little? Are there roles or functions that you think are important for a high school counselor to perform, even if they may not be important for your child? Do parents because of their expectations encourage their students to see their school counselor? What kind of advice or encouragement have you given to your child regarding working with the school counselor? (If none, why?) What led you to give them that advice? In what way do you think your previous experiences played a role in whether or not you encouraged your child to seek out the counselor?

				In what way do you think your expectation of what a counselor's role is, played a part in whether or not you encouraged your child to seek out the counselor?
RQ 2 :	Parental gain/parent expectations	2 groups of Parents  450 parents	Group Interviews  Parental Expectation School Questionnaire	What do/can you expect to gain as a parent when working with a school counselor? What does/can your son/daughter expect to gain from working with their school counselor? If no gain, what barriers prevent school counselors from meeting parent expectations? How important do you think the counselor is to your son or daughter's success in school? (Career, college, academics, social-emotional) What are some unrealistic expectations that you think some parents hold for school counselors?
RQ3 :	Parents prior interactions/ school counselor expectations	2 groups of parents  450 Parents	Group Interviews  Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire	Can you describe a particular experience or interaction (positive or negative) you have had with your high school counselor? Do you see any relationship between previous experiences or interactions you have had as a parent that has changed or influenced your expectations of school counselors? Based on your experiences how can school counselors be more effective in interactions with parents? Additional questions to be added after focus group interviews.
RQ4 :	Relationship parental expectations and advice/encouragement to children	450 parents	Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire	Can you name your child's counselor? Has your child seen the counselor this year? Have you ever talked to your child's counselor? How highly do you value the role of the school counselor? Number of times you have had contact with the counselor this year? Number of meetings with counselor within last year? Have you ever received written info from your child's counselor?

## Instrumentation

The mixed method approach results in two levels of inquiry. The first consists of two focus groups of parents. Focus group A consisted of eight parent participants and focus group B consisted of seven parent participants. The second phase was a questionnaire (PESCQ) which was constructed based on information gleaned from the focus groups and interviews. The purpose of these methods was to uncover the expectations that parents have of secondary school counselors and what motivates them to work with those counselors. The questionnaire (PESCQ) was utilized to substantiate themes from the focus groups and interviews and tested the relationship between parental expectations and motivation.

### *Focus Groups*

Focus groups were conducted to explore the overall themes about what parents expect of secondary school counselors along with what motivates those expectations. The researcher utilized an open-ended interview protocol which has been included in Appendix B. The interview questions were developed by the researcher and validated through pilot interviews. The literature in chapter two discussed the various perceptions and expectations of stakeholders. Themes emerged which provided more knowledge about exactly what parents expect of school counselors and what motivates those expectations. The information gained from the focus groups led to the development of the (PESCQ) questionnaire.

### *Individual Interviews*

Follow up sessions from focus groups were available to parent participants; however, no parents requested additional time or debriefing. Parents were provided an index card to elaborate on parental expectations or to request additional time with the researcher for further interviewing. If a parent had requested additional time a telephone interview would have been conducted after the initial focus groups were completed. The interviewer would have asked several open ended

questions related specifically to parents' individual experiences of working with their students' secondary school counselor and how based on these experiences it had influenced their expectations. A copy of the interview protocol is included in Appendix B.

### *Questionnaire (PESCQ)*

Once the questionnaire was constructed based on the focus group responses, the PESCQ was distributed to 450 parents during one day registration held January 31, 2006. The surveys were distributed to parents as they came into registration at school A and as the parents completed registration at school B. The researcher or designee chose every third parent along with purposeful sampling those of diversity to complete the survey. The survey was retrieved immediately upon completion by the researcher or one of her designees. The (PESCQ) was a survey that consisted of Likert Scale questions which had categories that ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The survey measured parental expectations in the areas that emerged during the parent focus groups.

## Data Collection

### *Pilot Study of Instruments*

A pilot study was completed on both the qualitative and quantitative parts of the research to maintain content validity. The interview protocol for focus groups was piloted with four high school parents. The PESCQ was piloted and read by ten high school parents. All of these parents were purposefully selected. This allowed for changes to be made to assist in clarifying or eliminating confusing questions. The interview questions were reviewed by the research committee members and chair to ensure that the questionnaire was easy to understand. As a result of piloting the instruments, the length of time to complete the survey was assessed and a survey specialist affirmed the instrument had face validity.

### *Scheduled Focus Groups*

Participants were given a telephone number to call if questions arose prior to the scheduled focus group. In addition, time was allowed at the beginning of the group for participants to ask questions as well as to identify participant pseudonyms and obtain informed consent signatures. The groups were conducted by the researcher, face to face in the school of the parent participants. The researcher provided pizza and drinks for the parent participants.

### *Questionnaire*

In order to prepare for the arrival of the questionnaire, the researcher contacted the administrator/counseling coordinator and the researcher's designees who distributed the survey. The questionnaire was forwarded via email or hand delivered to the principals of each school for approval. The questionnaire was handed out to parents by the researcher or her designees during one day registration at two Southwest Virginia schools. The details of the study were included in a brief paragraph prior to the survey. (Appendix F). Questionnaires were distributed and immediately collected upon completion by designees.

Figure 2

### *Procedural Steps in Data Collection*

STEP 1:	Conduct pilot interviews with high school parents (four) and make adjustments to interview protocol and research questions
STEP 2:	Conduct parent focus groups (2 high schools, 15 parents total)
STEP 3:	Conduct supplemental parent interviews based on parent focus groups (as identified or requested)
STEP 4:	Analyze qualitative interview by coding and review for emerging themes

STEP 5:	Integrate Data
STEP 6:	Develop PESCQT (Parental Expectation Questionnaire)
STEP 7:	Pilot Study PESCQ and make necessary adjustments to questionnaire (10 parents)
STEP 8:	Administer PESCQ during One Day Registration (350 parents)
STEP 9:	Analyze quantitative results
STEP 10:	Conclusion/Results of Study

### *Qualitative Analysis*

Qualitative data were collected through two parent focus group sessions and used to gather descriptive information from the participants. The interviews were audio recorded and the researcher reviewed the tapes and had them transcribed. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher completed the initial coding of transcripts. An interactive process was used to refine the coding process and codes were reduced to a smaller number to reflect more thematic and categorical groupings. Transcripts were reanalyzed with the reduced set of codes to look for interrelationships between categories. The coding process was used to look for six to eight recurring themes. These themes produced major findings of expectations that parents have of secondary school counselors and what motivates them. An analytical matrix was developed for research questions to assist in clustering the common themes that developed. The themes were used to set the groundwork for the development of the Parental Expectation of School Counselor Questionnaire. The researcher used rich, thick description to provide and add clarity to the findings (Patton, 2002). The researcher's chair reviewed the interpretations of the qualitative data to ensure internal validity and control for researcher bias.

### *Quantitative Analysis*

Upon completion of analysis of the focus group data, the Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire (PESCQ) was developed. The researcher looked for comparisons between the interview data and the quantitative data from the questionnaire. All statistical analysis regarding the research questions in this study was completed using SPSS for Windows, v 13.0 and answered research questions presented in this study. Description statistics, frequencies, correlations, and ANOVA's were used to look at relationships among demographics, global variables and parental expectations.

### *Integration*

Data were integrated after the qualitative phase, after the quantitative phase, and again at the end of the research study. The rationale for using both qualitative and quantitative data was to support findings from the focus groups and interviews. By using both methods the researcher obtained a clearer perspective and insight into parental expectations of school counselors.

### *Survey Response Rates*

The questionnaire was given out to approximately one out of every three parents who participated in one day registration. In addition, parents of various races were purposefully sampled. A total of 350 surveys were returned during the one day registration from 12 noon until 7 pm from two high schools located in SW Virginia. Two hundred fifty surveys were passed out in school A. Two hundred seven surveys were collected from school A which yielded a return rate of 83%. Two hundred surveys were handed out in school B. 143 were collected from school B which yielded a return rate of 73%. School A had an enrollment of 884 students with 580 parents participating in the one day registration on that day. The researcher collected surveys from 36% of the parent population on that day. School B had an enrollment of 1260. 995 students were eligible for registration and approximately 90% of parents participated in the one

day registration on that day. The researcher collected surveys from 16% of the parent population on that day. Parents did have the option not to participate in the survey.

In addition, percentages of parent participants who have 12<sup>th</sup> graders were low since one day registration was for rising 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Those parents who participated who had 12<sup>th</sup> graders either were assisting with registration, had other children who were being registered that day, or were parents in the school building for other reasons.

### Anticipated Ethical Issues

All participants in this study were informed of the potential risks and benefits from their participation, and assured that they could decline participation or discontinue participation at any time. To protect confidentiality, each participant of the focus group was given a pseudonym that was used during the interview and with transcription. With the questionnaire, participant's names were not used. In order to maintain confidentiality, the data from the questionnaire or qualitative transcripts will only be shared with the researcher's committee and will not be shared with individuals who were not participating in this project. Data will be kept for five years and then destroyed. Pseudonyms were used for all schools, school districts, and school counselors. Since the researcher is an employee of one of the school districts, focus groups were not conducted in the school where the researcher works. All data were reviewed by the researcher's chair to validate accuracy and interpretation.

### Summary

The intent of this mixed methods study was to provide descriptive information regarding parental expectations of school counselors using a qualitative approach and supporting it with a quantitative questionnaire. Explanations and comparisons were made between the focus groups and the PESCQ. Chapter three provided a detailed discussion of the research questions, data collection procedures, and the statistical techniques that were implemented to analyze the data.

## Chapter IV: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### Introduction

The purpose of this two-phase, sequential mixed methods study was to explore parental expectations of secondary school counselors. Chapter four presents the data analysis from both the qualitative and quantitative inquiry into each research question individually. Information was obtained from parent focus groups and the Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to answer the research questions.

### Summary of Research Questions

The four research questions were addressed:

- 1) What are the attitudes and general beliefs that parents have regarding expectations of school counselors?
- 2) What do parents expect their children to gain from working with secondary school counselors?
- 3) How do parents' interactions with school counselors impact their expectations?
- 4) Is there a relationship between parental expectations and what advice and or encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors about personal, academic, and career issues?

### *Focus Groups*

Focus groups were conducted in order to gain an understanding of what parents expect of secondary school counselors. The Assistant Principal of school A, and the Parent Teacher Student Organization Director at school B, identified a diverse group of parents who were selected to participate in the focus groups. Two focus groups were conducted with a total of fifteen parents at two SW Virginia schools.

*Demographic Information*

Participants from focus group A were from a suburban area located in SW Virginia. In 2006, school A had 342 graduates. Of those, 70% enrolled in post secondary programs. 35% enrolled in a four year institution, 31% in a two year institution and the remaining 4% enrolled in other vocational or military programs. Students who attend school A represent the following racial and ethnic backgrounds: Black: 38%, Asian 1.8%, Hispanic 2.7% Caucasian 57.1% and American Indian 2%.

Participants from focus group A consisted of 1 male and 7 females. All of the participants in focus group A were parents of students who were “A” or “A/B” students. Parents were purposefully sampled by student grade level. Based on the parents’ report, their students have had an average of two counselors through their high school career. In addition, parents of focus group A also reported that they have had contact with their child’s counselor at least two times during the last calendar year (January 2006-January 2007). Furthermore, parents also disclosed that their children have participated in the following: Governor’s school, extracurricular activities, special education, 504 plan, and music/drama.

Participants from focus group B were from a suburban area in SW Virginia. In 2006, this school had 203 graduates. Of those 86% enrolled in post secondary programs, 56% enrolled in a four year institution, 26% in a two year institution and the remaining 4% enrolled in other post secondary programs.

Focus group B included seven parents with one male and six females. Parents of this focus group have children who earn mostly “A”, “B”, & “C” grades. Based on the parents’ report, their students have had an average of two counselors through their high school career. Parents also reported in this focus group that they have had an average of at least two contacts with their child’s counselor during the last calendar year (January 2006-January 2007). Furthermore,

parents also disclosed that their children have participated in the following: Governor's school, music/drama, extracurricular activities, athletics, and special education. (Table 1).

Table 1

*Qualitative Parent Focus Group Demographics*

Focus Group	Participant	School	Parent Gender	Grade	Other Children/Grade	Currently Enrolled	Graduated	Race
Focus Group A								
1	Curly	A	Male	11		1	Yes	Caucasian
2	Sally	A	Female	12	9	2	Yes	Caucasian
3	Goldie	A	Female	12		1	Yes	Caucasian
4	Susie	A	Female	12		1	Yes	Caucasian
5	Sue	A	Female	12		1	No	Caucasian
6	Ginger	A	Female	12		1	Yes	Caucasian
7	Fantasia	A	Female	12		1	Yes	Caucasian
8	Faith	A	Female	12	10	2	No	Caucasian
Focus Group B								
	Participant	School	Parent Gender	Grade	Other Children/Grade	Currently Enrolled	Graduated	Race
1	George	B	Male	12		1	Yes	Caucasian
2	Anne	B	Female	12		1	Yes	Caucasian
3	Bionce	B	Female	12		1	Yes	Caucasian
4	Julia	B	Female	11	9	2	No	Caucasian
5	Jessica	B	Female	10		1	Yes	Caucasian
6	Dana	B	Female	10		1	Yes	Caucasian
7	Beth	B	Female	9		1	Yes	Caucasian

## *Analysis*

Analysis of the interview data was conducted by the researcher using an inductive approach to the initial coding. The inductive phase involved open coding of the interview transcripts. The researcher coded all transcripts and compiled an initial set of codes. After repetitive readings of the transcripts, codes were collapsed and refined. The coding scheme was condensed to more thematic and categorical groupings. An analytical matrix was developed for each qualitative research question. (Appendix I). Themes were organized by each research question.

The researcher developed the Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire which captured data collected in one day during a registration process at two different high schools in SW Virginia. Permission was granted from the coordinator of guidance and principals of each school. Surveys were distributed and collected during the same day in the high school setting.

### *Individual PESCQ Demographic Data*

Responses on the Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire (PESCQ) were used to describe the beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of the parents who participated in this study and to determine the relationships between demographic variables and overall parental expectations of secondary school counselors. Questions 9 through 14 were used to collect demographic information and may be useful in understanding the parental expectation data. The variables discussed are in the order that they appeared on the PESCQ.

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender. The majority of respondents in the study were female (79.1%, n= 277), followed by the male participants (18.9%, n= 66). Seven respondents chose not to answer this question.

Next, the parents were asked to indicate whether or not they had a son or daughter that had graduated from high school in Virginia. The survey captured parents from both sides of the spectrum. Almost half (43%, n=152) of the parent participants indicated that they did have a

child that had graduated from high school, and the remaining parents (54%, n=192) reported that they had not had a child graduate from high school. Six parents didn't respond to this question.

With regard to their children, parents were asked how many children they currently have enrolled in high school. The highest response rate was for one child (70.6%, n=247), followed by two children (24.3%, n=85) and then three children (3.1%, n=11). Only one respondent reported having more than three children (.3%).

The parents were also asked to indicate the current grade level of their son or daughter and for those parents who have more than one child, to indicate all grade levels that apply. Grade levels were distributed fairly equal ranging from approximately 26-30% in grades 9-11 and a small portion of senior parents, only 15%. Seven parents did not respond to the grade level of their student. Table 2 below indicates the responses from parents about student grade level.

Table 2

*Student Grade Level Demographics from PESCQ*

*N=343*

Grade Level	Valid Percent
9 <sup>th</sup>	27.3
10 <sup>th</sup>	30.2
11 <sup>th</sup>	26.7
12 <sup>th</sup>	15.8

Parents were also asked how long they have lived in the current school district. Most parents have lived in the area for more than six years (68.9%, n=241). This is followed by the next highest group of parents who have lived in the area from 4-6 years (14.5%, n=52). Also a

small percentage of parents have lived in the area from 1-3 years (13.1%, n=46). This is followed by the smallest group of participants who indicated that they have lived in the area for less than one year (1.4%, n=5).

Participants were asked to choose the category which best described their racial background. The largest group of respondents reported their cultural background as Caucasian (86.9%, n=304). Other races reported by parent participants were Hispanics (1.1%, n=4), Asian (2.9%, n=10), and African American (11%, n=3.1). The PESCQ also provided a category of “Other” and allowed participants to note additional racial backgrounds (e.g Native American), that may not have been listed on the survey. A small percentage of parent participants chose this response (3.4%, n=12). Nine respondents chose not to answer this question.

#### *Additional Demographics*

In addition, parents were asked in question 5 “How many different school counselors has your child had during grades 9-12 including your current counselor?” Descriptive analysis was performed to get the results below. (Table 3).

Table 3

#### *Number of Counselors During High School*

*N=335*

Number of School Counselors	Frequency
0	8
1	229
2	71
3	19
4	7
5	1

Most students had one counselor through their high school years in grades 9-12 (65.4%, n= 229). In addition, some students (20.3%, n=71) had two counselors. However, the remaining students had three or more counselors throughout their high school years (7.7%, n=27). Furthermore, eight parents responded by saying that their student didn't have a school counselor. It is noted that all students at both schools have an assigned school counselor.

Parents were also asked in question 6, "How many contacts have you had with your child's school counselor within the last calendar year (January 2006 - January 2007)?" Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the results. 338 parents responded to this question. Approximately half of the parents surveyed have made contact with their child's school counselor at least once (23.7%, n=83) or twice during the calendar year (25.4%, n=89). The remainder of parents reported making contact with the school counselor three (13.1%, n=46), four (6.3%, n=18), five or six times (6.6%, n=23).

In addition, parents were asked to indicate "yes", "no" or "unsure" to the following questions in the PESCQ 7a-7d:

Has your child seen their school counselor within the last calendar year (January 2006-January 2007)? Have you received written information from your child's school counselor at home? Do you know the name of your child's assigned school counselor? Have you spoken to your child's school counselor within the last calendar year? Descriptive analysis was used to compute the results provided in Table 4.

Table 4

*Questionnaire Responses About School Counselors*

	Parents who reported yes	Parents who reported no	Unsure
Child has seen counselor	69.6% (n=238)	22.5% (n=77)	7.7% (n=27)
Received written information	32% (n=110)	61.6% (n=212)	6.4% (n=22)
Know name of school counselor	84.3% (n=290)	14.2% (n=49)	1.5% (n=5)
Spoken to school counselor	70.9% (n=244)	27.3% (n=94)	1.7% (n=6)

It appears that the majority of children have seen their counselor during the time frame from January 2006 - January 2007. In addition, parents were aware of their child's school counselor was and most have taken the opportunity to speak to the counselor. Furthermore, a large percentage, 61.6% of the parents surveyed stated that they hadn't received any type of written information from the school counselor.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

The first research question was, "What are the attitudes and general beliefs that parents have regarding expectations of school counselors?" This question was answered through a series of interview questions:

- 1) As you reflect about the job of a high school counselor, what roles and responsibilities do you think the school counselor should perform?
- 2) Specifically, of those roles and responsibilities you mentioned, which do you value the most and least as a parent?
- 3) What values do you share with the school counselor?
- 4) Are school counselors asked to do too little or too much?

Focus group participants were asked to reflect on the job of the high school counselor. Participants were then asked, “What roles do you think the school counselor should perform?” Based on the question asked, focus group participants generated a list of eighteen items that reflected their attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of school counselors. (Appendix H).

Then, codes were refined and collapsed to produce seven main themes which emerged from the analysis. Those themes included:

- a) be available, communicate, and provide information
- b) help my child choose classes and assist with schedule and graduation requirements
- c) assist my child with transition planning to work or college, assist with college applications and scholarships
- d) know my child personally, guide my child, and be attentive to my child’s needs
- e) provide individual counseling, referrals and resources
- f) advocate for my child
- g) meet regularly with my child both individually and in groups

Based on the seven themes that emerged from the focus groups, an analytical matrix was composed. Themes were collapsed from seven to the four strongest that were most mentioned across the two parent focus groups based on sample frequency. Those were: 1) be available, communicate, and provide information 2) assist my child with transition planning to work or college, assist with college applications and scholarships 3) know my child personally, guide my child, and be attentive to my child’s needs and 4) provide individual counseling, referrals and resources. The primary theme identified by parents as the most important parental expectation was to know and guide the student.

### *Communication*

Parents in the focus groups believe that communication is vital. Parents stated that communication is a major expectation and comes in many forms such as being available to students and parents when needed and being able to provide pertinent information that may be in written form or discussed verbally in person or via phone. When describing one form of communication Susie stated, “I’d like written information that is mailed to the parent because an announcement to a child is not going to get heard and they might miss the announcement.” Here the parent was referring to the daily announcements of scholarships and other pertinent information such as SAT or college visit information that may be relayed over the intercom to students. Bionce mentioned that it would be helpful to “communicate with the parents, whether by telephone or email or just updates by semester.” Curly emphasized the importance of the counselor just being available. He reflected, “some seniors are not on campus and have a lot going on so I think there may need to be an extra effort for those kids.” It appears that at one school kids may have difficulty accessing the counselor during the school day if they take classes at other places. Susie responded again with a suggestion for school counselors. She stated,

We send a newsletter home and we send the final grades home...I have often wanted a timeline, a suggested timeline written down when SAT’s are generally taken and when the deadlines are due and how the process works because it is hard to maneuver.

Communication seems to be an important area for parents. Six of the fifteen parents responded to this emerging theme out of a total of fifteen.

### *Transitional Planning*

Transitional planning was identified by 8 parents out of 15 as an important expectation of parents. This additional theme emerged from the parent focus groups. When parents were asked about this, they emphasized their opinion regarding the need for students to be informed about

college or work, and the process for each. Sally described the importance this way. “I think that if we could have school counselors looking at their academic life, and their classes, that would be important.” Bionce responded to the same question and commented on what she believed would be helpful to students. She said, “helping them select a college that best fits their needs.” Anne added a thought regarding the college process and application piece she stated, “working with them on all of the requirements that go into making the college applications.” Even though most of the participants have college bound students, one parent, Bionce commented, “we all have college bound children, but for the great many students that aren’t going to college, I think a counselor could help them and should be able to help them transition into a career.” Dana provided a positive example of the school counselor assisting her child with colleges. Dana reflected,

She was very wishy-washy as to wanting to go to college or not and no matter what I as her parent had said, when it came out of the counselor’s mouth, well you should apply here and here and here...she suddenly came home and said, okay, I’m applying here and here and here. This was absolutely invaluable because it made a huge difference on where my daughter is now.

The next theme that emerged was individual counseling.

### *Individual Counseling*

Parents identified that individual or personal counseling was an important need that parents expected school counselors to provide to students. Parents want counselors to assist children who are having emotional or behavioral problems as well as to direct them to adequate resources. Six out of fifteen parents identified this as an important need. Several were able to speak to some of the areas related to individual counseling. Curly spoke to his awareness of what school counselors do in this area. He mentioned,

Counselors have to deal with kids that are highly unmotivated and then you can get into emotional needs that kids have. I know there are behavioral problems and all of those sort of things that counselors have to deal with.

Bionce stated, “that by helping a child who is having a problem would be helping him or directing them to the correct resource.” Susie stressed the need for the referral process she added, “school counselors need to be able to refer a child in crisis.” George mentioned another example,

When a student goes to a teacher and says, I was just beaten by my parent, when a student says, I’m pregnant, when a student says, I have a dilemma and I don’t know how to deal with it. I’m gay, and my mom is mad, or my dad’s mad, or whatever, that student should be going to a guidance counselor, not a teacher.

George believes that students have better relationships with their teachers than they do with their guidance counselor. He sums it up by stating, “That scares me as a parent.” George illustrates the importance of school counselors knowing their students and providing individual counseling to them. Individual counseling was an expectation of parents; however, the next theme is the dominant theme that emerged across the focus groups.

#### *Know the student/Guide the child*

As the focus groups progressed, it became apparent that the major theme from the majority of parents was to know and guide the student. This theme emerged through words such as know my child, guide my child, develop a personal relationship with my child, and attend to my child’s needs. When parents elaborated on the importance of having the school counselor know and or guide their child Sally said, “I think one thing that the counselor should do is get to know his or her student as an individual and be able to determine which category or area that the child may need the most attention.” Ginger summed up her opinion by addressing the importance of attending to student’s needs by commenting,

I have had three kids and each one of them is different and they had three different counselors and each one of them knew them well enough too, I feel like, they should be attentive to their needs. So, when my son kept trying to drop out of Spanish and I told him, “No, you have to take Spanish” she (school counselor) wouldn’t let him do it. She made him call me; but, when my daughter came in and said, you know, that physics class is just not hard enough for me, I need a different class. She let her switch out of one class and go into another one- I think that is being attentive to their needs, so I have a third child who goes in and she’s got it all worked out and she knows when the classes are offered and who’s teaching them and who’s in the class and she goes in with her counselor, knowing that I support that, and she (school counselor) lets her do that. So, I do think school counselors need to be attentive to students’ needs. I just don’t think that you can do this job without being responsive to what the child brings to the situation.

Goldie provided an alternate opinion about knowing the kids. She reflected,

I don’t care if they know the kids. There is no way that the counselor is going to be able to be attentive to the needs of whoever. I mean, this kid may have had problems at home, or they may have a problem with a boyfriend or whatever. I don’t see that counselors are going to have any time for that, given all of these other things that we’re asking them to do and I’m not sure it couldn’t be better done by someone else anyway, because their job has been so regimented in what I see that, I come up here to get what I want. I don’t look for the school counselor to be attentive to my child’s needs in that way. I’m looking for educational support, not the other stuff.

Parents seem to have a realistic perspective that counselors are stretched pretty thin. Bionce states, “I don’t believe it is quite possible.” Here she was referring to counselors being able to

meet the needs of all students. Several parents mentioned this as their most important expectation but also suggest that in order for this to occur that counselor student ratios would need to be adjusted. Ten out of fifteen parents believe that this theme is the most important but it also appears that barriers exist that keep this from occurring.

### *Values*

Parents reflected on the comprehensive list (eighteen identified items) that was written on the board that they had developed during the course of the focus group. This listing was comprised of all parent expectations, attitudes and beliefs of school counselors. Then, parents were asked which of the items they valued most. Parents of focus group A acknowledged that what they valued most was for the school counselor to know the student, communicate, guide the child, develop personal relationships with students and act as a student advocate. In focus group B parents identified what they valued most was guiding the child, developing personal relationships, acting as a student advocate and assisting with college. When group B discussed this in depth, all of the original values collapsed into one area which was guiding the child. George stated, "As a parent, I believe that a guidance counselor's job, from my perspective is to guide the child." All parents from focus group B concurred and it appeared from their discussion even when they talked about what they valued whether assisting with college, developing a personal relationship or advocating for a child, it all came down to guiding the child. This was an effort to member check with the participants about their response related to the first research question about parental expectations, attitudes, and beliefs.

Parents of focus group A were able to identify what they valued least from school counselors. According to this group what they valued least was being attentive to all student needs and emotional needs. Even though parents seem to want school counselors to provide

individual counseling and meet students' needs, there appears to be a distinct difference in the expectation from parents and the reality that this can actually occur.

In addition, parents of focus group B reached many of the same conclusions as focus group A but also stated that parents and school counselors have shared values. Parents identified that those shared values should be student success, encouragement towards the student to be all the student can be and to reach their potential, to prepare the child for college, to do what is in the best interest of the child academically, socially, emotionally, and to help the student to pass SOL's and graduate. All parents of this focus group agreed that the focus should be shared values between parents and the school counselor. However, George carefully pointed out,

The guidance counselor does not report to the parent, they report to administration and administration's goal is to have 100% pass rate on the SOL's and to have every student graduate. Unfortunately, the guidance counselor's time is not being spent learning our children's goals so that they can better help them get into the right college or whatever. Their time is spent focusing on testing, focusing on getting the kids to graduate so their goal is not what our goal is. I wish it were.

Dana stated,

In spite of the fact that the counselors don't necessarily know every student by name and that sort of thing, I do think that the intent is there for every child to be all that they can be and be as successful as the counselor could help them be, and it's even better if that also gets them to graduate and pass the SOL's.

George followed up with,

I feel that the focus is different, that our focus as parents as to what we would like counselors to spend their time on is different than what they are told they have to spend their time on by the administration.

Through the focus group interviews key expectations have been identified on what parents expect of secondary school counselors. The parent focus group produced the first main result - wanting counselors to know their students. Parents believe that when school counselors know their students, they are better able to guide the child throughout high school. Ten out of fifteen parents in focus groups stated that this was a parental expectation of secondary school counselors. The next level of analysis intended to gain a further understanding of what parents expect of school counselors through a larger sample of parents with a survey.

Research question one asked, “What are the attitudes and general beliefs that parents have regarding expectations of school counselors?” Question one was addressed initially with qualitative data from parent focus groups and now will be explored through statistical analysis using SPSS. Through the parent focus groups seven themes emerged and these themes were reflected in the survey under items 1a-1g. (Table 5).

Table 5

*Parent Focus Group Themes and Matching PESC Question*

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Be available, communicate and provide information	1a. Be available to me & communicate with me through phone, email, meetings, & provide written information such as testing dates and timelines
Help my child choose classes and assist with their academic schedule, and graduation requirements	1b. Help my child choose classes and assist with their academic schedule, testing, and understanding of graduation requirements

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Assist my child with transition planning to work or college and assist my child with college applications and scholarships	1c. Assist my child with transition planning to work or college & assist my child with college applications and scholarships
Know my child personally, guide my child, and be attentive to my child's needs	1d. Know my child personally, guide my child, and be attentive to my child's needs throughout my child's high school years
Provide individual counseling, referrals, and resources	1e. Provide individual counseling as needed and provide referrals when indicated
Advocate for my child	1f. Advocate for my child (with teachers, parents & administrators)
Meet with my child regularly both individually and in groups	1g. Meet with my child regularly both individually and in groups to provide information to them beginning in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade

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Parents were asked to rate their agreement with each question on a scale from 1 to 4 where 1 represented “strongly disagree” and 4 represented “strongly agree.” (Table 6). Parents who completed the PESCQ confirmed that they agreed that all seven areas identified by the focus groups were areas of importance.

Table 6

*Parental Attitudes, Beliefs & Expectations of School Counselors*

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
Be available	4.6% (n=16)	1.4% (n=5)	20.9% (n=73)	73.1% (n=4)
Choose classes	4.9% (n=17)	1.4% (n=5)	15.1% (n=53)	78.6% (n=275)
Transition planning	5.3% (n=18)	.9% (n=3)	19.3% (n=66)	74.6% (n=255)
Know my child	3.4% (n=12)	4.0% (n=14)	37.5% (n=131)	55.0% (n=192)
Individual counseling	3.2% (n=11)	2.9% (n=11)	29.5% (n=102)	64.5% (n=223)
Advocate for child	4.1% (n=14)	4.1% (n=14)	32.3% (n=110)	59.5% (n=203)
Meet with child	3.8% (n=13)	5.3% (n=18)	36.9% (n=125)	54.0% (n=183)

Means were reviewed in each of the seven areas and it appears that parents do agree that these are areas that parents expect their child's school counselor to focus on. All seven areas have received a rating of at least 3.0 which indicated parental agreement. All seven variables seem to be close together in means. Frequencies were also performed. It is also important to note that there may be other areas of importance to parents but these were the ones identified and confirmed by participants in this study.

### RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

The second research question was "What do parents expect their children to gain from working with secondary school counselors?" Parents from the focus group responded with a variety of gains for their students. Results concluded that parents expect their children to gain information and knowledge from their school counselor. Parents believe that information and knowledge can come in many forms from scholarship information and graduation requirements to college or financial aid information.

During the analysis, three main themes emerged. The first theme was information and knowledge which included key topics such as scholarship information, financial aide, graduation

requirements, colleges and other opportunities. The second theme was guidance in making choices about colleges and academic classes. The third theme that emerged was receiving transitional information from high school to work. In the analytical matrix (Appendix K) George was identified as the outlier. George has identified all areas as a parental expectation. Among the other participants, information and knowledge is the strongest parental expectation followed by, guidance in making choices and transitional planning which appear to be of equal importance among the remaining parent participants. Ten out of fifteen participants responded to this question.

### *Parents Expectation of Child Gains*

Parents expect their children to work with school counselors to gain assistance in these three areas. Goldie described her perception of how kids see school counselors.

I think our kids assume that these people (school counselors) have their best interests at heart to the deepest level; their academic best interest at heart, their emotional best interests at heart and at least your school-related best interest. I do think that students assume you're going to help me get where I need to go because they have worked really hard and represented the school well.

Parents began to elaborate on the areas that seemed important to them. Faith discussed transitional information. She reflected that students could gain transitional information from their school counselor. She mentioned that special education students can transition to programs at colleges and work and receive assistance from their school counselor even though there is a transitional specialist here. She stated, "our children would fall right under there with every body else, so, these kids could really gain a lot from them if they are knowledgeable enough to work with them in that respect." Another parent spoke about transitioning from a trade in a technical program. Goldie commented,

If you look at the kids transcripts and see that they've been in all the technical programs and they've done really well in masonry or whatever, help them transition into apprenticeships or trade school or the community college or a two year program in that trade.

Another theme that emerged from the focus groups related to helping students make choices related to colleges and academics. Ginger gave her opinion about this with her three children. She reflected, "I think that all three of them expect their counselor to be able to point them in the direction that they should go based on what they have seen of their performance in high school." Goldie mentioned,

I don't have any 4.0 students and mine are solid A/B students who are expected to figure out the maze of colleges and where to apply. My child is wondering, where can I get in, what's the best fit for me, and they all think that somehow the counselor is going to give that to them.

Another parent reemphasized the importance of receiving guidance in making choices with colleges from school counselors. Dana stated, "guidance is what they're looking for...they don't know what they want to do, where they want to go to school. They need help making those choices." Another parent in the focus group spoke to the student gain of knowledge. She stated, "I think having knowledge of requirements that the student must complete and knowledge of what the counselor feels would be the best courses for my student to take according to their ability." According to this parent, counselor knowledge about courses and requirements would be a student gain. On the other hand, one parent expressed her thoughts about the possible differences between what students may expect and what parents expect. Bionce mentioned,

I don't know what the students expect because their expectations, I think, are a lot lower than the parents' expectations of school counselors. We're looking for a lot more out of them than the kids.

### *Parental Gains from School Counselor*

Another question asked was "What can you as a parent expect to gain when working with a school counselor." Ten of the 15 parents responded by reflecting on possible gains for themselves as parents. The parent responses were coded. Codes were refined and collapsed to produce four emerging themes. Those themes were information & knowledge, guidance in making choices about colleges and academic classes, problem solving skills and transitional planning. The strongest theme and parental expectation was gaining information and knowledge from the school counselors.

Susie reflected on the first theme which was her need for information and knowledge. "I just basically want information and knowledge...What information is available?" Information and knowledge as explained by the parents would come in many forms such as scholarships, financial aide, and graduation requirements, colleges and other opportunities. Fantasia stated, "I would expect the counselor to give me information on scholarships, the deadlines when they're due and that kind of information." Curly also spoke to the group about gaining information about scholarships. He commented,

I think it would be very beneficial to my daughter, to help her financially, especially if you're not only looking at undergraduate, but possibly postgraduate. It might be a quarter of a million dollars in debt when she comes out of school and begins her profession. When asked what he would gain as the parent, his response was having this information on scholarships would be a financial gain. Eight out of fifteen parents expect their child to gain information and knowledge from working with their school counselor.

The second theme that emerged was the expectation for their child to gain guidance in making choices about colleges and academic classes. Dana reflected on this area she stated,

A lot of the colleges, it makes a whole lot of difference as to what language perhaps you take or how many years you take... As a 9<sup>th</sup> grader, often you don't know what college you want to go to—my older daughter, if she had taken something other than Latin, anything other than Latin, she wouldn't have had to take a foreign language in college. But, because she took Latin, it doesn't count. Whenever the kids start honing in on at least what kind of college they're going to, it would be helpful to have some guidance in that kind of area.

In summary, parents believe their child should gain information and knowledge, guidance, and transitional information from their school counselor. These areas include information on scholarships, financial aide, graduation requirements, colleges, opportunities as well as assistance in making choices about colleges and academic classes. Furthermore, parents expect their child to gain transitional information that may be needed from high school to work or to college.

The themes that emerged from parents regarding what they expect their child to gain from working with the school counselor are essentially the same as what the parent expects to gain from working with the school counselor; however, there is one addition which is problem solving. Sue mentioned, "I expect the counselors to help me solve problems and that's the time I've gone to see a school counselor is when I have had a problem concerning something at school." Parents mentioned that an additional gain for them would be receiving help from school counselors on problems that their students may have and how to help them best. Ten parents out of fifteen responded to both questions.

*Barriers & Unrealistic Expectations*

After parents responded to the questions about parent and student gains, they were asked “If unable to identify a gain, what barriers prevent school counselors from meeting parental expectations?” In addition, parents were asked to identify any unrealistic expectations that parents may have.

Parents recognized that barriers existed that prevent school counselors from meeting parents’ expectations. Focus group participants identified a total of four barriers; specifically time, counselor to student ratio, administration, and testing. One important barrier identified by parents was the counselor to student ratio. Parents believed that counselors were responsible for too many students to be effective. Parents elaborated that large student case loads contributed to school counselors not meeting parental expectations and prevented school counselors from getting to know and guide students appropriately. Parents were also asked about the work load and whether school counselors were asked to do too much or too little. Thirteen out of fifteen parents stated that school counselors were asked to do too much. George reflected,

They could do it if they weren’t asked to do unrelated things that are not counseling ...priorities match the wants of administration and the school board...not the wants of the parents.

Another parent stated, “It’s inhuman.” Susie followed up with “what we hear is that they have, individually, too many students to care for.” Sue also commented,

I feel they definitely have too much too. I’ve gotten enough, but I think we may not know everything that they’re actually responsible for and that they’re spread so thin. They can’t do enough for everyone because they’ve got to do a little bit for the 400 students they have. I just keep thinking that this would not happen at a smaller school, because it’s just numbers.

Goldie expressed her frustrations of the student/counselor case load she mentioned, “our kids have gone up, but our counselors went down.” Curly expressed an alternate view and his disappointment by stating,

I don’t know. I feel like they’ve done too little with both of my children’s experiences. Now, they may have too much to do, but they haven’t spent enough time with my children. That’s the way I feel about it.

Beth discussed with the group her understanding of administrator’s expectations she said, I think administrators expectations are different than what the parents would be and what the students’ expectations would be, such as testing. If they can’t get out of the testing, they don’t have the time to get to know the kids.

George also added, “their job responsibilities go above and beyond what’s on our list and it detracts from the time they can spend with the students.” George spoke on barriers in general, he stated,

The focus should be individual attention of the student; however, the primary job of the school counselor today is testing. Not one person in the first 15 minutes we’ve been here said testing (as a parent expectation), but the guidance counselor spends a huge amount of time doing SOL testing, retesting, other testing.

Parents were also able to identify unrealistic expectations that parents may have. Those unrealistic expectations included life planning and solving all problems- academic and emotional. Goldie elaborated on her thoughts about life planning. Goldie stated, “I think it’s unrealistic for parents to expect life planning for their kids.” Goldie believes that the focus for school counselors should be on college advising. Bionce spoke to her experiences with other parents and their opinions regarding school counselors solving all student problems. She commented,

A lot of parents do think of them as counselors and they're going to counsel their child in all aspects, academic and emotional, and I think in talking to parents they kind of dump them (their students) on the guidance counselor who's like, in my ten minutes in the school year, I'm supposed to solve his emotional problems? I think that's unrealistic.

I think they (parents) use that instead of getting real help.

Anne added to that by saying, "the guidance counselor maybe can facilitate to help and direct them (the child), but the guidance counselor can't fix it." Dana concluded by mentioning that the consensus of the group had been on getting to know kids; however, it appears that parents have identified barriers that prevent that from occurring. She summed up this question by saying,

Unfortunately, as the system is now, that is a totally unrealistic expectation...with them doing all the testing and having hundreds of students under their charge even if the school counselor meets with them for fifteen minutes...you don't get to know a child in fifteen minutes...I don't know how to fix that.

With thirteen out of fifteen parents speaking to the fact of counselors having too much of a work load, parents seems to be easily able to identify what prevents counselors from meeting their expectations along with what unrealistic expectations that parents may have.

Research question two is "What do parents expect their child to gain from working with the school counselor?" Parent focus groups were asked to identify those gains and three main themes emerged. In addition, parents were asked to identify what they as parents could gain from working with the school counselor. From those themes one additional idea emerged and was incorporated into the PESQC under survey questions 2a – 2d. Those themes include:

a) information and knowledge (scholarships, financial aide, graduation requirements, colleges, and other opportunities)

b) guidance in making choices about colleges and academic classes

c) problem solving skills

d) transitional information from high school to work or college.

Each of these themes was applied to the survey and was analyzed through descriptive statistics. Parents were asked, “As a parent, what do you expect your child to gain from working with the school counselor?” Parents were asked to indicate their agreement with each question by rating it 1) strongly disagree 2) disagree 3) agree 4) strongly agree and non applicable.

Frequencies were reviewed and means were compared in each of the four areas. (Table 7).

Table 7

*Child Gains and Comparison of Means*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Information and knowledge	n=346	3.66	.729
Guidance in making choices	n=347	3.57	.766
Problem solving skills	n=348	3.24	.799
Transitional information	n=347	3.48	.777

The mean averages for the variables were close ranging from (3.24-3.66). With a rating of at least 3.0 indicating parental agreement, the majority of parents agree that these four areas are important gains for their child when working with the school counselor. Although all means are close, 94% of the 346 parents who responded agree that they expect their child to gain information and knowledge from working with the school counselor. (Table 8).

Table 8

*Comparison of Parental Expectations and Child Gains*

N=343

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
Information and knowledge	4.6% (n=16)	1.4% (n=5)	17.1% (n=59)	76.9% (n=266)
Guidance in making choices	4.9% (n=17)	2.3% (n=8)	23.9% (n=83)	68.9% (n=239)
Problem solving skills	4.0% (n=14)	10.6% (n=37)	42.5% (n=148)	42.8% (n=149)
Transitional information	4.6% (n=16)	3.7% (n=13)	30.3% (n=105)	61.4% (n=213)

Information and knowledge was identified by the largest group of parents in the PESCCQ as the strongest endorsement “strongly agree” for their students to obtain from the school counselor 76.9% (n= 266). Information and knowledge includes the areas of scholarships, financial aide, graduation requirements, colleges and other opportunities for their students. The survey confirmed each of the four areas identified as important gains in the focus groups. Furthermore, the survey confirms that parents’ strongest expectation of what their child should gain from their school counselor is information and knowledge (76.9%, n=266). In addition to means and frequencies being reviewed, one way ANOVA’s were computed by utilizing the following variables (info/knowledge, making choices, transitional information, and problem solving). The above four variables were added for each participant and each participant was given a total global score. The global score was labeled as child gains. The demographic variables were selected for this analysis based on the items listed on the PESCCQ. ANOVA’s were conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in the global child gains when compared by demographic variables. The first demographic variable was to look at the two schools where data were collected. With regard to the schools, no significant difference was

found between child gains and the school where the student attended  $F(1,348)=.414$ ,  $p=.520$ .

The second demographic variable was gender. There was no significant difference found when

looking at gender and child gains  $F(1,341)=1.054$ ,  $p=.305$ . Another variable included graduated

(whether the parent had a child that had graduated). Again, no significant difference was found

$F(1,342)=.815$ ,  $p=.367$ . The next demographic variable was currently enrolled (reviewed for

significance in child gains with the number of students the parent had currently enrolled). Once

again, no significant difference was found  $F(3,340)=2.005$ ,  $p=.113$ . Another demographic

variable residency was also analyzed. Again, no significance was found  $F(3,340)=.830$ ,  $p=.478$

with the amount of time the parent had lived in the school area. Race was also reviewed where

again no significance was found  $F(4,336)=.786$ ,  $p=.535$ . No significant differences were found in

child gains scores based on any of the demographic variables. Furthermore, there was no

significance found by grade levels 9–12.  $F(3,337)=1.106$ ,  $p=.347$ . It appears that the

demographic variables listed above have no relevance to what the child can gain from working

with a school counselor. In other words, parents have similar expectations of what their child

should gain from working with the school counselor regardless of the school attended, grade

level, or race. Table 9 below represents the demographic variables and statistical analysis.

Table 9

*Comparison of Expected Child Gains by Parent Demographics (ANOVA)*

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Schools	Between Groups	3.296	1	3.296	.414	.520
	Within Groups	2771.092	348	7.963		
	Total	2774.389	349			
Gender	Between Groups	8.239	1	8.239	1.054	.305
	Within Groups	2666.320	341	7.819		
	Total	2674.560	348			
Graduated	Between Groups	6.362	1	6.362	.815	.367
	Within Groups	2668.216	342	7.802		
	Total	2674.578	343			
Currently Enrolled	Between Groups	46.483	3	15.494	2.005	.113
	Within Groups	2628.096	340	7.730		
	Total	2674.578	343			
Residency	Between Groups	19.455	3	6.485	.830	.478
	Within Groups	2655.124	340	7.809		
	Total	2674.578	343			
Race	Between Groups	24.533	4	6.133	.786	.535
	Within Groups	2622.775	336	7.806		
	Total	2647.308	340			
Grade Level	Between Groups	26.034	3	8.678	1.106	.347
	Within Groups	2643.924	337	7.845		
	Total	2669.959				

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\*p < .05

*Barriers*

During the parent focus groups, parents identified three areas that interfered with school counselors being able to meet parent expectations. Those included:

1. too many students on school counselor's case load

2. testing (SOL's)
3. not enough time (too many non-counseling related duties, administration)

Analysis of data from the questionnaire confirmed findings from the focus groups.

Table 10

*Frequencies of Barriers Perceived by Parents*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Too many students	4.6% n=15	10.9% n=36	40.7% n=134	43.8% n=144
Testing/SOL's	7.8% n=25	19.0% n=61	42.7% n=137	30.5% n=98
Not enough time	5.6% n=17	19.9% n=61	44.8% n=137	29.7% n=91

Parents seem to agree that the greatest barrier to meeting parent expectations was having too many students (84.5%, n=278). Parents also seem to agree that testing is another area that interferes with school counselors being able to meet their expectations (73.2%, n= 235). Finally, over 70% ( n=228) of parents feel that school counselors don't have enough time to perform tasks due to administration and non counseling related tasks that they are asked to perform.

In addition to comparing means and frequencies, One Way ANOVA's were conducted on the barriers. Once again an individual score was totaled for each participant based on the barriers and all participants' scores were added together to get a sum which was titled as the participants total global score. The global score was computed and labeled as global barriers. The demographic variables were selected for this analysis based on the items listed on the PESQ. ANOVA's were conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in the global barriers when compared by demographic variables. The following demographic variables were examined: gender, whether the parent had a child that had graduated from high school in Virginia (graduated), the number of children currently enrolled in high school (currently enrolled), grade level of their child, length of time in area (residency), race, and the school that

the student attended. N= the number of participants who responded. Table 11 presents the results of these ANOVAs.

Table 11

*Comparison of Total Barrier Scores by Parent Demographics (ANOVA)*

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Schools	Between Groups	3.299	1	3.299	.377	.540
	Within Groups	3043.890	348	8.747		
	Total	3047.189	349			
Gender	Between Groups	2.458	1	2.458	.286	.593
	Within Groups	2928.020	341	8.587		
	Total	2930.478	342			
Graduated	Between Groups	.284	1	.284	.033	.856
	Within Groups	2935.989	342	8.585		
	Total	2936.233	343			
Currently Enrolled	Between Groups	15.836	3	5.279	.615	.606
	Within Groups	2920.397	340	8.589		
	Total	2936.233	343			
Residency	Between Groups	16.119	3	5.373	.626	.599
	Within Groups	2920.114	340	8.589		
	Total	2936.233	343			
Race	Between Groups	15.394	4	3.849	.456	.768
	Within Groups	2835.304	336	8.438		
	Total	2850.698	340			
Grade Level	Between Groups	64.671	3	21.557	2.547	.056
	Within Groups	2852.455	337	8.464		
	Total	2917.126	340			

\*p < .05

In analyzing the PESCQ, the group global barrier scores did not produce any significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) when compared to the seven demographic variables through the statistical analysis of ANOVA. Despite the gender of the parents, various schools, grade levels surveyed,

and additional variables used, it appears that there aren't differences in perceptions of barriers among the parents that were surveyed.

### RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

The next research question is "How do parent's interactions with school counselors impact their expectations?" Results from research question three yielded no significant results quantitatively but provided some meaningful information through the qualitative focus groups. The focus group participants were asked to describe a particular interaction either positive or negative that they had with a school counselor. Findings revealed three main influences that promote interaction between parents and school counselors. First, parents believe school counselors are important to their student's success. Second, parents seek information to understand the roles and functions of school counselors. Third, parents are motivated by the individual needs and wants of their children which promoted interaction. Because of the needs of their children and the belief that school counselors are the key to their success, parents are motivated to work with the school counselor. Furthermore, results also showed that parents indicated that what they expected of their own school counselors when they were in school took place most of the time (63.6%, n= 206). Therefore, parents appear to have expectations of school counselors which are based upon both their past experiences as students and in their current roles as parents.

Parents' interactions with school counselors have an impact on their expectations. In parent focus groups, parents explained positive, negative, and neutral experiences with school counselors. Those parents who interacted with school counselors gained a better understanding of school counselors' roles and functions. Due to those interactions and understandings, parents were more realistic about what school counselors could do and as a result adjusted their

expectations as needed. Also, parents seemed to be influenced by success, motivation, and encouragement which promoted interaction between parents, students and school counselors.

This question was followed up with another question which was, “Do you see any relationship between previous experiences or interactions that you’ve had as a parent that has changed or influenced your expectations of school counselors?” With this question, parents seemed to have various opinions. Curly, who previously spoke about his negative scholarship experience, mentioned that his expectations have not changed. Ginger, mentioned that when she was informed about a particular role of the school counselor regarding scheduling and who was actually responsible for the master schedule she admitted that she thought school counselors were responsible for ensuring that kids got what they requested because as she puts it “I would have expected that the counselors would have something to do with that. You know, they’re the ones that know the students.” Susie mentioned that due to her poor experiences that her current experiences have been “a pleasant surprise, but it has also made me more proactive.” It appears her expectations have changed based on receiving knowledge about the school counselor’s role. Below is another example of how she didn’t have any expectations and due to her interactions with the school counselor her expectations have improved. She reflected,

My younger daughter is assigned to a counselor who I had no expectations- I expected nothing and was told, I want to meet you. I want to know you. I want to know your daughter. I want to meet with her regularly. I felt like she was there. So, my expectations have improved greatly because she was there.

Parents also discussed their motivation to work with school counselors and several parents mentioned that their child’s needs motivated them to work with the school counselor. Curly stated, “to want the best for my child” motivated him to work with the school counselor. Two parents commented on the reality of their expectations. Bionce commented,

I realized my wildest dream expectations were not reality and that this woman (the school counselor) is too busy to be doing things I previously thought a school counselor did. So, yes, it definitely changed my expectations now.

Anne followed up with:

I think I have a better realization of all that they are expected to do. I do think that has changed what I expect for them to do for my child because I realize they are humans and that they just cannot do everything. That's reality.

In summary, it appears that parents who have a better understanding of school counselor's roles and functions are more realistic about what school counselors can do and they are able to adjust their own parental expectations accordingly. It also appears that parents who have a thorough understanding of school counselor roles are more motivated to work with school counselors in addition to meeting their students' needs. It also appears that for one parent his expectations based on his interactions with school counselors have not changed and for two other parents, positive experiences have made them more proactive as a parent. For one other parent, due to the positive experiences that she has had, her expectations have improved tremendously. Furthermore, it seems important to note that individual needs of the child and wanting what is best for their child, motivates parents to work with school counselors.

In addition to the qualitative inquiry, research question three was examined quantitatively. The third research question was "How do parent's interactions with school counselors impact their expectations?" Questions 4a-4d were questions asked of parents rating the influence in why the parent, or the child work with the school counselor. The statements were 4a) My child's school counselor is important to my student's success 4b) Because of my expectations, I encourage my child to see their school counselor 4c) As a parent, I am motivated by the needs of my child to work with the school counselor and 4d) My own personal

expectations with the school counselor when I was in school were met. Parents were asked to indicate their response by using the ratings below for each item. 1) strongly agree 2) agree 3) disagree 4) strongly disagree. Descriptive statistics were performed in Table 13 to see the parental response relating to parental influences. Those variables included student success, encouragement, motivation, and personal expectations.

Table 12

*Parental Influences*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Student Success	3.34 (n = 341)	.779
Encouragement	3.31 (n = 343)	.768
Motivation	3.32 (n = 339)	.757
Personal Expectations	2.78 (n = 324)	.987

*Note. Total survey participants = 343*

343 parents responded to these influences and it appears parents agree that three areas influence their interactions with school counselors. Those areas are student success, encouragement, and motivation. Table 13 reveals that over 89% of the parents indicated that their child's school counselor is important to their student's success (89.2%, n=304). Also, (89%, n=303) parents agree that motivation is an indicator in encouraging parents to work with the school counselor. A large number of parents were motivated by the needs of their child to work with the school counselor (89.4%, n=303). Next, was the influence noted by most parents that because of their expectations they encourage their child to see the school counselor (89.0%, n=305). Parents seem to agree that parental expectations equal parental encouragement provided

to their children. The last question inquired about their own personal expectations being met when the parent was in school. This yielded agreement among the parents. It appears that more than half of the parents surveyed indicated that what they expected of school counselors when they were in school took place (63.6%, n= 206).

Table 13

*Comparison of Frequencies and Parental Influences When Working With School Counselors*

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
Success	4.1% (n=14)	6.7% (n=23)	40.5% (n=138)	48.7% (n=166)
Encouragement	3.8% (n=13)	7.3% (n=25)	42.9% (n=147)	46.1% (n=158)
Motivation	3.5% (n=12)	7.1% (n=24)	43.4% (n=147)	46.0% (n=156)
Personal Expectations	12.7% (n=41)	23.8% (n=77)	36.1% (n=117)	27.5% (n=89)

One Way ANOVA's were conducted on the parental influences. Once again a global score was totaled for each participant in each of the four areas (student success, encouragement, motivation, and personal expectations). Participants scores were added together to obtain a sum for each participant. These scores were labeled as a total global score. The global score was computed and labeled as global influences. The demographic variables were selected for this analysis based on the items listed on the PESCQ questions 4a-4d. ANOVA'S were conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in the global influences when compared by demographic variables. The following demographic variables were looked at: gender, whether the parent had a child that had graduated from high school in Virginia (graduated), the number of children currently enrolled in high school (currently enrolled), grade level of their child, length

of time in area (residency), race, and the school that the student attended. N= the number of participants who responded. See Table 14 below.

Table 14

*Comparison of Parental Influences by Parent Demographics (ANOVA)*

N=350

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
<b>Gender</b>					
Between Groups	2.380	1	2.380	.311	.578
Within Groups	2612.272	341	7.661		
Total	2614.652	342			
<b>Graduated</b>					
Between Groups	4.584	1	4.584	.599	.440
Within Groups	2618.009	342	7.655		
Total	2622.593	343			
<b>Currently Enrolled</b>					
Between Groups	18.666	4	4.667	.608	.657
Within Groups	2603.927	339	7.681		
Total	2622.593	343			
<b>Grade Level</b>					
Between Groups	13.601	3	4.534	.592	.621
Within Groups	2582.987	337	7.667		
Total	2596.588	340			
<b>Race</b>					
Between Groups	68.626	4	17.156	2.261	.062
Within Groups	2549.235	336	7.587		
Total	2617.861	340			
<b>Residency</b>					
Between Groups	9.564	3	3.188	.415	.742
Within Groups	2613.029	340	7.685		
Total	2622.593	343			
<b>School</b>					
Between Groups	.027	1	.027	.003	.958
Within Groups	3434.441	348	9.869		
Total	3434.469	349			

\*p<.05

In analyzing the 350 parenting questionnaires, the parental influences did not produce any significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) when compared to the seven demographic variables (Table 14).

#### RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

The final research question for the parents was, “Is there a relationship between parental expectations and what advice/encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors?” The next question was “Do parents, because of their expectations, encourage their students to see their school counselors?” Findings indicated that parents who had expectations of what school counselors did encouraged their children to consult and interact with their school counselors. Significant correlations were found with the number of times a parent was in contact with their school counselor and the motivation to work with a school counselor. Parents believed that school counselors were important to their student’s success and encouraged their child to see their school counselor. Parents also appeared to be motivated by their child’s needs and wants.

##### *Encouragement*

Parents agree that they encourage their children to see their school counselor because of their expectation of what they think the school counselor should do. Ginger stated, “that’s their first line of defense as a parent is to tell your child to go see your counselor.” Another parent followed up with, “yes, I’m always saying, that sounds like something you should email your guidance counselor about.” Beth followed up with, “I think the encouragement is there but the reality is they (school counselors) don’t know them.” So it appears that parents do provide the encouragement for their children to see the school counselor; however, the original theme that continues to emerge is the importance of knowing the student.

Parents were also asked, “What kind of advice or encouragement have you given your child regarding working with a school counselor? Sue commented,

I encouraged my child to make herself known to her counselor because I felt like the more she put her face in front of her counselor’s face, the more she would be recognizable.

Fantasia responded by saying “the squeaky wheel gets the attention.” Sue also mentioned that she thinks encouraging her daughter to be known by the school counselor is important for the student/counselor relationship. Jessica stated,

As a parent, I would encourage my child to go to the guidance counselor because that’s like the right step. They need to learn how to approach those people that can help them along the way and that would be, to me, a natural step.

Parents were also asked, “In what way do you think your previous experiences have played a role in whether or not you’ve encouraged your child to seek out a counselor?” The parents with previous experiences with children in high school agreed that previous experiences have enabled them to know how to direct their children. Curly commented that due to past experiences with his other children his third child has benefited the most because his other two were guinea pigs in the process. He reflected,

Because of being through the system with previous children you begin to understand how the game is played and you’ve got to get your child to speak up or you’ve got to speak up.

Susie commented on her negative past experiences but continues to try to process what should be done and usually before she figures it out, her child does. Another parent, Ginger, mentions that since she has been through the high school process before, she really has been affected. She reflects,

I'm more realistic about what the counselor can and can't do. I'm much less willing to tell my youngest child to go and ask and more willing to say go and make a strong suggestion to the counselor if this is really what you want.

Bionce mentioned that she didn't even know her high school counselor when she was in school and she believes they didn't know her either. She states, "now school counselors do know kids." She states, "I think that definitely in the 20 some years that it's definitely progressed." Dana gave an example of what things were like with her school counselor when she was in high school.

I did not know my guidance counselor for the most part. I started high school in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and I had to go in and fill out a form as to what I was going to take. So my dad and sat down and we filled out, secretarial courses, typing, bookkeeping, all that sort of thing, useful skills. So I went to school, had my 15 minutes with my guidance counselor, and she looked at it and she went, sweetie, you were advanced placed in algebra one and in foreign language, which apparently was unheard of to be advanced placed in both in those days and you're going to go to college so she tore this thing up right in my face, filled out another one, physics, chemistry, advanced da da da...and said take this home tell your daddy to sign it and you are going to Virginia Tech. I said, Yes, maam and that is definitely what happened, so and I probably never saw her again. That fifteen minutes changed my life in a huge way. Also, when we had a daughter who was floundering and I said, you need to talk to your guidance counselor, she had her 15 minutes with her counselor, and it made a huge difference to her. So when it works, it's wonderful.

According to parents, there is a relationship between what parents expect and the advice and encouragement they give to their child. Parent's expectations seem to be based on what parents perceive the school counselor's role is and what they actually do. Several parents encourage their children to become familiar and interact with the school counselor in order to

foster a personal relationship with the school counselor. It also seems apparent that based on the focus groups, parents believe that previous experiences with school counselors help them to participate in the educational system and enable them to direct their child more effectively. In addition, parents who have had personal experiences as a child with a school counselor that were positive seem to encourage their child to see the school counselor. It also appears that the parents that have had these positive experiences believe that school counselors can make a difference and they view the role of the school counselor as valuable. Furthermore, it was also interesting that parents didn't speak to specific areas such as personal, academic, or career areas as the question specified but parents rather described their advice and encouragement in terms of descriptive experiences.

Quantitative analysis was performed to answer the following research question, "Is there a relationship between parental expectations and what advice/encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors?" Question 4c asked: As a parent, I am motivated by the needs of my child to work with the school counselor. Parents were asked to indicate their opinion based on the following 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) agree, or 4) strongly agree. This question was computed through SPSS and descriptive frequency statistics to look for percentages of agreement and disagreement among parent participants. Findings indicated that 43.4 %, (n=147) of the parents agreed and another 46%, (n=156) of the parent population strongly agreed that they are motivated by the needs of their child to work with the school counselor. It also is important to note that approximately 10% of the parent population is not motivated by their children to work with school counselors. Furthermore, 11 parents did not respond to this question. Table 15 displays the results.

Table 15

*Demographic Frequencies of Parents Motivation to Work With School Counselor*

<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>N</i>
Strongly Disagree	3.5	12
Disagree	7.1	24
Agree	43.4	147
Strongly Agree	46.0	156

*Total Survey Participants= 339*

Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 16 of the parental response relating to parental influences. Those variables included student success, encouragement, and the child seeing the school counselor.

Table 16

<i>Influences</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Student Success	n=341	3.34	.779
Encouragement	n=340	3.31	.768
Child Seeing School Counselor	n=338	.93	.733

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used as the statistical analysis to determine if there was a relationship between the continuous variables. In the first calculation the following PESCQ items/variables were used. 4a) My child's school counselor is important to my student's success (student success), 4b) Because of my expectations, I encourage my child to see their school counselor (encouragement) and 7a) Has your child seen the school counselor within the last calendar year (January 2006 – January 2007)(child seeing school counselor).

Table 17

*Correlation of Influences*

<i>Influences</i>	<i>Student Success</i>	<i>Encouragement</i>	<i>Child Seeing Counselor</i>
<hr/>			
Student Success			
Pearson Correlation		.710**	.019
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.723
N	341	340	338
Encouragement			
Pearson Correlation	.710**		.010
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.850
N	340	343	340
Child Seeing School Counselor			
Pearson Correlation	.019	.010	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.723	.850	
N	338	340	342

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Findings indicated two areas of significance at the 0.01 level between student success and encouragement. The 0.01 level is considered significant for two tailed tests. Results revealed that there is a strong correlation ( $r = .710$ ) between student success and encouragement ( $p = .000$ ). This means that what parents believe about school counselors being important to their students success is directly related to the encouragement that parents gave their child regarding seeing their school counselor. However, there were no significant correlations between the number of times a child sees a counselor and the importance of the school counselor to the student's success ( $r = .019$ ) and encouragement provided by the parents to see their school counselor ( $p = .850$ ).

Descriptive statistics were reported in Table 18 to review means between the number of contacts a parent makes to the school counselor and how motivated the parent is to work with the school counselor.

Table 18

*Comparison of Means Between Parental Contacts and Motivation*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of Contacts	n=338	1.87	1.637
Motivation	n=339	3.32	.757

The second Pearson correlation was performed using the following questions from the PESCQ: 4C) As a parent, I am motivated by the needs of my child to work with the school counselor. Parents were asked to give a rating based on 1-4 or not applicable. Ratings included 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree 3) agree 4) strongly agree and non applicable. Question #6 on the PESCQ was also utilized. Parents were asked, “How many contacts have you had with your child’s school counselor within the last calendar year?” Parents were asked to circle a number from 0-5 or the word “more”. Table 19 provides the results from the PESCQ.

Table 19

*Correlation Between Number of Contacts and Motivation*

<i>Number of Contacts</i>		<i>Motivation</i>
Number of Contacts		
Pearson Correlation		.160**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
N	338	332
Motivation		
Pearson Correlation	.160**	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
N	332	339

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson’s correlations showed that there was a significant but weak correlation ( $r = .160, p = .004$ ) between the number of contacts a parent has with a school counselor and the

motivation that a parent has to work with the school counselor. It appears that there is a relationship between what advice and or encouragement parents give their child when consulting school counselors.

### Summary

This chapter presented the results of the current study. This study produced four main results. First, most parents want counselors to know their students (n=349). Parents believe that when school counselors know their students they are better able to guide the child throughout high school. Ten out of fifteen parents in focus groups stated that this was an expectation of secondary school counselors. In addition, generally, parents believe that knowing and guiding their student was a primary expectation they have for school counselors.

Second, parents expect their child to gain information and knowledge from their school counselor. Parents of the focus groups identified this as the strongest theme. Parents who were surveyed confirmed that information and knowledge is an expectation of school counselors and 94% (n=325) of those parents surveyed believe their child can gain this information and knowledge from school counselors. Parents believe that information and knowledge can come in many forms from scholarship information and graduation requirements to college or financial aid information.

Parents also recognized that barriers existed that prevent school counselors from meeting parents' expectations. The greatest barrier identified by parents was the counselor to student ratio (84.5%, n= 278). Parents believed that counselors were responsible for too many students to be effective. Parents elaborated that large student case loads contributed to school counselors not meeting parental expectations and prevented school counselors from getting to know and guide students appropriately.

Results from research question three produced meaningful findings and insight.

Parents' interactions with school counselors impacted their expectations. In parent focus groups, parents explained positive, negative, and neutral experiences that they had with their children with school counselors as well as their personal interaction with their own school counselor when they were in school. Through those interactions with school counselors, parents gained a better understanding of school counselor's roles and functions and are able to adjust their own parental expectations. Parents also rated influences in the PESCQ. Results revealed that parents' expectations were influenced by success, motivation, and encouragement which promoted interaction between parents and school counselors. Results revealed three main influences that promote interaction between parents and school counselors. First, parents believe school counselors are important to their student's success (89.2%, n=304). Second, parents need an understanding of school counselor roles and functions. Third, parents are motivated by the needs and wants of their children which promotes interaction (89%, n=303). Because of the needs of their children and the belief that school counselors are the key to success, parents are motivated to work with the school counselor. Furthermore, results indicated that what parents expected of school counselors when they were in school occurred more than half of the time (63.6%, n=206). Parent's previous expectations or experiences as students may contribute to their current expectations. The fourth finding of this study showed that there was a relationship between what parents expect and the encouragement and advice parents gave their children about working and consulting with school counselors. Analysis showed that parents who had expectations of what school counselors did encouraged their children to consult and interact with their school counselors ( $r=.710$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Also, a significant correlation was found with the number of times a parent was in contact with their school counselor and the motivation to work with a school counselor ( $r=.160$ ,  $p=.004$ ). Results also revealed that parents believed that school counselors

were important to their student's success (89.2%, n=304) and due to this belief or expectation they encouraged their child to see their school counselor. Parents also appeared to be motivated by their child's needs and wants. The child's needs appear to be a direct indicator in initiating encouragement and motivation towards involvement with school counselors. It appears that parents are driven by their children's needs and wants which increases a parent's motivation and promotes interaction between parents and school counselors. All of which can impact parental expectations of school counselors.

The following demographic variables were examined: gender, whether the parent had a child that had graduated from high school in Virginia (graduated), the number of children currently enrolled in high school (currently enrolled), grade level of their child, length of time in residential area (residency), race, and the school that the student attended. Throughout the questionnaire demographics were compared to parental expectations, child gains, barriers, and influences. Demographic variables did not produce any significant results.

Parents identified their primary expectation which was to know and guide their student and provide them with knowledge and information. Parents believed that school counselors are central to their student's success and due to this school counselors are in an instrumental place to work with parents. Parents have identified that student's needs and wants are a primary motivator for parents to work with school counselors but also a motivator for parents to encourage their children to consult with and work with school counselors. Parents have also noted that these influences: counselor roles, success, child needs and the understanding of counselor roles promote parental interaction with school counselors which can impact parental expectations. Furthermore, parents who have a thorough understanding of school counselor roles are more motivated to work with school counselors and in encouraging their child to work with their school counselor. Parents also pointed out that one of the primary reasons for encouraging

their child to work with the school counselors is for the school counselor to be able to know them, develop a personal relationship with them and guide them.

Chapter Four presented the results of the data analysis that was conducted from both the qualitative and quantitative inquiry into each research question individually.

## CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study, including the review of the research questions and a discussion of the significant findings. In addition, recommendations for parents, counselors, administration and school board are presented based on the findings from the data analysis of this study.

### Summary of the Results

ASCA (2006) has developed a model of specific roles and functions that school counselors should perform. In this study, parents have provided their attitudes, beliefs and expectations of school counselors. Although parental expectations were studied many years ago, no attention has been given to parental expectations and expectancy theory.

The intent of this sequential mixed methods study was to explore parental expectations of secondary school counselor's roles and to gain an understanding of how expectancy theory influences parental expectations. Information was gathered through two parent focus groups consisting of fifteen participants from two high schools, and then through the Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes and general beliefs that parents have regarding expectations of school counselors?
2. What do parents expect their children to gain from working with secondary school counselors?
3. How do parents' prior interactions with school counselors impact their expectations?
4. Is there a relationship between parental expectations and what advice/encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors about personal, academic, and career issues?

Participants in this study consisted of parents of high school students in grades 9 through 12 in four public high schools in South Western Virginia. Data were collected through two parent focus groups and the Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire (PESCQ).

The specific findings for the research questions are summarized below:

#### RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

1. What are the attitudes and general beliefs that parents have regarding expectations of school counselors?

Question one was addressed through the focus group interviews and confirmed through the PESCQ. Data were coded and analyzed to look for relationships between categories. The constant comparative analysis led to emerging qualitative themes. Four themes emerged from the focus group interviews. This data was integrated into the PESCQ.

#### *Parental Expectations and Beliefs*

During the focus group interviews parents described their expectations of school counselors. Expectations of school counselors included 1) being available, communicating, and providing information 2) assisting my child with transition planning to work or college, assisting with college applications and scholarships 3) knowing my child personally, guiding my child, and being attentive to my child's needs and 4) providing individual counseling, referrals and resources. Parents stressed the importance of communication and see this as a vital component to the school counseling program. Parents described communication and providing information in many ways such as in written form, through in-services to parents, through telephone or email. Parents also emphasized the importance of school counselors just being available. With students going in so many directions and often to other locations availability seems to be necessary. It is interesting to note that of the parents surveyed 69% (n=238) of the parents stated that their child

has seen the school counselor and parents report that 70% (n=244) of them have spoken to the school counselor within the calendar year. Also, 32% (n=110) of the parents surveyed have received written information from their school counselor. So it appears that the majority of parents and students are having contact with their school counselor.

Parents also emphasized the importance of transitional planning to college or work. Parents stressed the need for assisting students with looking at their academic life and classes and assisting them in finding a college or work place that best fits the students' needs. Parents were equally concerned about providing services not only to advanced and college bound students but also the great percentage of students who are not going to college and may be looking for a career.

Parents also see the need for individual counseling and referral to appropriate resources for students. Parents were aware that there are students who need of counseling services to deal with behavioral or emotional issues and one expectation mentioned was for school counselors to meet with these students and refer them to services that may be helpful.

The major theme throughout the focus groups and confirmed by the PESCQ is for school counselors to know the student. Parents described knowing the students in a variety of ways such as guide my child, develop a personal relationship with my child, and attending to my child's needs. Parents believe that if school counselors get to know their students that they will be able to guide their child in the right direction. Parents also recognized the importance of student individuality. Each student has different needs and by getting to know them both personally and academically, relationships are formed.

Although parents expect school counselors to know their students parents are also aware that counselor case loads are high and that it is quite impossible to know and meet the needs of

all students. Ten out of fifteen parents believe that knowing your student is the most important expectation they have but also they are aware that barriers exist that prevent this from being realized. Parents identified barriers that keep school counselors from meeting their expectations. Those barriers included too many students on the counselor case load, testing (sol's), and non-counseling related duties (administration).

Parents also discussed what they valued the most and least of school counselors. Parents of one focus group stated that they valued school counselors knowing their child and parents of the other group valued school counselors guiding their child. Parents also commented on their shared values between parents and school counselors. Both parents and school counselors share wanting each student to be successful, be all that they can be, reach their potential, be prepared to go to college, and to graduate. In addition, shared values between the counselor and parents also included doing what is in the best interest of the child.

### *Expectancy Theory*

Expectancy theory maintains that the degree of effort that individuals are willing to put forth is the amount to which they expect to succeed and the degree to which the task is valued (Green, 2002). It appears that parents value school counselors knowing and guiding their children. Parents believe that school counselors are essential to their student's success and since school counselors and parents have shared values of doing what is in the best interest of the child motivation should be high for parents and school counselors to work together. According to Giles (2005) parents and educators hold each other accountable for the student's education. When parents and school counselors have good relationships problems can be addressed and trusting relationships can be formed. All of which are necessary to promote shared values and motivation.

Parents of one focus group also discussed what they valued least of school counselors. This was the individual counseling. ASCA (1990) identified counseling as one of the three main areas of professional school counseling. Individual and group counseling should be provided by school counselors to assist students in learning (Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001). Although parents acknowledged the need for counseling services in focus groups and this was confirmed in the questionnaire, it appears that some parents believe that counseling issues may be better dealt with by outside professionals. It also seems that parents may not be aware of the counseling expertise that school counselors have and only see counselors handling academic issues. In addition, parents may have only seen their counselor for academic reasons when they were a student which may also influence these values. This information is helpful in understanding what areas of the school counseling program may need further explanation and education.

## RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

2. What do parents expect their children to gain from working with secondary school counselors?

This research question was answered by integrating the data from the focus group interviews and the PESCQ. This process allowed for different types of data to be used to ensure accuracy of the study.

Focus groups were asked to elaborate on what the parents believe their child gains from working with their school counselor. Data were analyzed and themes emerged. The themes were confirmed through the PESCQ. One way ANOVA's were performed using the variables (information/knowledge, making choices, transitional info, and problem solving. The four variables were added for each participant and each participant was given a total global score

which were labeled as child gains. ANOVA's were conducted with demographic variables based on the PESCQ. Results revealed no significance using any of the demographic variables.

During the focus groups three dominant themes that emerged were: information and knowledge, guidance in making choices about colleges and academic classes, and receiving transitional information from high school to work or college. Out of the three themes that emerged gaining information and knowledge was the main one with guidance and transitional information ranking equally among parents. The PESCQ confirmed that 94% (n=325) of the parents who responded to the survey agreed that they expect their child to gain information and knowledge from working with the school counselor. Information and knowledge was the highest rating by parents 76.9% (n=266).

Parents elaborated that students believe that school counselors will assist them with transition plans to college based on their academic performance in high school. Other parents mentioned that school counselors are the ones with the knowledge about technical programs, work, and college and can help kids transition from high school to careers or college. Parents also agreed that school counselors have a wealth of information and knowledge about graduation requirements, colleges, and courses including what is best for the students based on their interests and abilities. Parents believe that school counselors are equipped to work with all types of students including those students with special needs. It appears that parents see providing information and knowledge to parents as a primary role of school counselors. It is good to see that parents believe that school counselors have expertise in these areas and can be a primary resource for all students.

Parents were also asked what they could gain as parents from working with the school counselor. The themes were the same as what they wanted their student to gain with one addition

which was problem solving. Parents would like for school counselors to assist them in developing solutions to problems that their students may be having. Parents seem to be aware that adolescence can be a challenging time and that school counselors can be a helpful resource to them not only for academic or college questions but in areas of personal growth and development. Parents could easily identify what their expectations were but they were also realistic that barriers existed that prevent school counselors from getting to know students well and in providing the best services to students.

School counselors often perform duties that are unrelated to their roles (ASCA, 1990). Duties such as scheduling, disciplinary actions, and clerical tasks often are assigned to the counselor due to administration needs (Fitch et al., 2001). As a result, students do not receive the services needed by school counselors. These barriers were also identified in this study. During the focus groups parents identified three areas that prevented school counselors from meeting parent expectations. Those included: too many students on school counselor's case load, testing (SOL's), and not enough time (too many non-counseling related duties, administration). Parents in the focus groups appeared to be aware of the school counselor's role and barriers that exist. The barriers were added to the PESCQ to see if this information could be confirmed with a larger number of parents. Descriptive analysis showed that parents believed that school counselors have too many students on their case loads. Frequencies of the barriers were also performed which showed that 84.5% (n=278) of parent believe this to be true. Additionally, 73.2% (n=235) agree that testing is a barrier and 74.5% (n=228) agree that school counselors don't have enough time due to extraneous tasks (non counselor related duties, administration). It appears that parents have a good idea of what the job responsibilities are of school counselors and are clear that despite what parents want-- their school counselor to know their student-- it seems virtually

impossible to do this with the current barriers in place. In order for school counselors to get to know students and to provide information and knowledge effectively, case loads will need to be reduced, school counselor roles will need to be understood and maintained and additional resources will need to be available or hired to assist with the time consuming task of SOL's and other non counseling related tasks.

Based on expectancy theory, parents can be motivated to work with school counselors through parent and counselor interaction particularly when the positive outcome equals their student's success. Parents have agreed in this study that they have shared values with their child's school counselor. Those shared values included wanting their student to be successful both personally and academically which relates to valence. Parents need to see the gain (outcome) of working with the school counselor. Parents have mentioned that their gains are information and knowledge, guidance in making college decisions and receiving transitional information. Now that parents understand their expectations and gains of working with the school counselor having this improved understanding of what parents expect can help both the counselor and parents to collaborate and work together more effectively. This parallels with Vroom (2006) who maintains that if you behave in a certain way or achieve a certain goal then you will be motivated to behave that way and reach that goal.

### RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

3. How do parent's interactions with school counselors impact their expectations?

The third research question was addressed by integrating the data from the focus groups and the PESCQ. One Way ANOVA's were conducted on the parental influences (success, encouragement, motivation, and personal expectations) and demographic variables (gender, graduated, currently enrolled, grade level, residency, race, and school). Participant scores were

added together to obtain sums for each participant and then labeled as a total global score (Influences). As with previous sections, there were no statistically significant differences between demographic variables and parental influences.

### *Parental Influences*

Parents in focus groups revealed three main influences that promote interaction between parents, students, and school counselors. The first was parents believe that school counselors are important to their student's success ( $M=3.31$ ;  $n=341$ ). This is consistent with the parent's expectation of providing information and knowledge. Parents seem to believe that school counselors have this expertise, their student can gain this information and through getting to know their child and working and interacting with them their student can be successful. Second, through these interactions parents gained a better understanding of the counselor role. Helping parents to understand the role of a school counselor will help parents be realistic about what school counselors can do and will also help to align parents' expectations as needed. Also, by understanding expectancy theory, counselors can create new experiences with parents which may change their expectations and improve the motivation for both the school counselor and parent to work together. Third, interaction of parents and school counselors is motivated by the parent's perception of their child's needs. Parents appear to respond to their children and are motivated to seek out their school counselor when a need arises. This is supported by expectancy theory. Vroom (2006) maintains that those who have a desire to satisfy a need, value, or goal will be motivated towards an outcome. These results show that parents are motivated by their child's needs. Parents also appear to be resilient. Although some parents have had negative experiences when they were a student in school, most parents indicated that what they expected of school counselors when they were a student took place more than half of the time (63.6%,  $n=206$ ). It

appears parents have been able to adapt and adjust their own parental expectations. Parents seem to be influenced by success, motivation, and encouragement. This was confirmed through the PESCQ and 343 parents responded in agreement that success, encouragement, motivation, and personal expectations were all influences that promote their interactions with school counselors. This is important information for school counselors to know so that they can have an understanding of parents' perceptions but also know the needs of parents and how to promote and encourage the interaction. By having an improved understanding of what parents expect, what they value, and what they would like to gain this will encourage a better working relationship between parents and school counselors. Furthermore, better relationships will increase parent satisfaction and will encourage more parental involvement in understanding of the school counselor's role.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

4. Is there a relationship between parental expectations and what advice/encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors?

This research question was addressed through the parent focus groups and confirmed through the PESCQ. Demographic frequencies were performed on one question about parental motivation. Findings indicated that 89.4% of the parents agree that they are motivated by their student's needs to work with the school counselor. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to look for relationships between student success, encouragement, and the child seeing the school counselor. There was a strong correlation between student success and encouragement. An additional correlation was used to compare the number of contacts that parents made to a school counselor during the calendar year and motivation to work with the school counselor. Findings showed that there was a significant correlation; however, it was weak. Analysis of data showed

that parents who have more contact with the school counselor were more motivated to work with the school counselor. The weak correlation may have occurred because parents may encourage their students to self advocate versus having the parent make contact. A stronger correlation may be found on elementary or middle school levels since adolescents are better able to self advocate. Another possibility is that parents may not make as much contact if their student is performing well and they don't feel the need for guidance. Also, it is possible more parental contacts with the school counselor may be due to lack of academic performance.

It is good to see that almost 90% (n=303) of the parents are motivated by their child's needs to interact with the school counselor. It is also interesting to see that 10% (n=36) of the parent population surveyed don't seem to be motivated by the variables chosen in this study and may be motivated by other areas that weren't researched. Reasons for the lack of motivation could be due to lack of understanding of the school counselor's role or due to a previous experience or perhaps these parents have had prior siblings come through and have a handle on academics, college information, and adolescence. Another possibility is that 10% of those parents are those that are hard to connect with and need more outreach by the counselors. Also, parent involvement at the high school level can be unusually low for low socioeconomic parents and parents of particular cultures (George, 2003). This may be due to parents feeling that they are not needed. Other possible barriers may include the parent's lack of confidence, a misunderstanding of the educational system or simply lack of opportunity. It is important for school counselors to keep in mind that expectations come from personal beliefs that are deep-seated as part of ones individual and cultural experiences (George, 2003).

Since parents believe that school counselors are essential to student's success it makes sense that parents encourage their child to see their school counselor. Parent's expectations seem

to be based on the perceived school counselor role. Parents reported many different types of experiences with the school counselor. Some parents encourage their children to promote the relationship between the school counselor and their student; other parents encourage their children to work with the school counselor because of their own personal experiences. It also appears that those parents who have had positive experiences truly value the school counselor and what they can offer. One additional thought is even though there is a relationship between parental expectations and the encouragement parents give their children when consulting school counselors parents didn't speak to specific areas such as personal, academic, or career areas but rather described their encouragement in descriptive experiences. This may be because they see the role of the school counselor as "global"—helping in all areas as needed which goes along with their expectation of providing information and knowledge to students which could be in many different areas from academic courses, college information and personal problem solving. It seems to be evident if the main expectation is for school counselors to know their students that parents are taking part in encouraging this relationship to occur.

### Summary

The focus group participants had a clear idea of what they expected of secondary school counselors. First and foremost, parents want counselors to know their students. Parents described this as guiding their child, developing a personal relationship with their child, acting as a student advocate and attending to their child's needs. Parents also agreed that they shared values with the school counselor. Those values included success of the student, providing encouragement to the student, preparing the student for graduation and college, and acting in the best interest of the student academically, socially, and emotionally.

Although barriers exist that prevent school counselors from getting to know their students, parents believe that when school counselors know their students they are better able to guide the student in a variety of areas throughout high school.

The second major finding from this research is that parents want their child to gain information and knowledge from their school counselor. This theme was identified in parent focus groups and confirmed by the PESCQ. Parents identified many different areas from which the information and knowledge would come from but see school counselors as the expert in providing this to students.

This research also supported that parent's interactions with the school counselor are driven by their child's needs which in turn increased the parent's motivation to work with the school counselor and motivated them to encourage their child to work with the school counselor. There are many influences to parental expectations but it appears that a child's needs, success, and understanding of counselor roles promote interaction and impact parental expectations. With the shared values that school counselors have with parents this all supports the importance of knowing your student. By knowing the student and developing a personal relationship with them the school counselor can provide helpful information and knowledge about many areas and share the same value as parents in encouraging success for the student.

Finally, this study contributed to research on expectancy theory. We previously learned that expectations are formed through experiences. Parents in the focus groups were able to discuss a variety of experiences both positive and negative. We also know that parents expectations may change based on new experiences and that parents are resilient and seem to be open despite experiences they may have had as a child with their school counselor. What we gained from this research is that parents do place great emphasis on their child's needs and wants

(valence). Parents also seem to be persistent in obtaining these (instrumentality) mainly because they want their child to be successful (outcome). Because of these beliefs and expectations this creates motivation towards working with the school counselor.

Based on expectancy theory and this research, it appears that parents are motivated to work with counselors through parent–counselor interaction particularly since the positive outcome equals their student’s success. Both parents and school counselors share values of what is important. Both want students to be successful both personally and academically which relates to valence. In addition, since instrumentality is related to parents obtaining what they desire, parents need to see the gain (outcome) of working with the school counselor. Gains identified by parents for their students in this study included receiving information and knowledge, guidance in making college decisions, and transitional information. By understanding expectancy theory, school counselors can create new experiences with parents which may change their expectations and improve the motivation for both the school counselor and parent to work together. This study has confirmed that expectancy theory can be applied to parental expectations.

#### Implications for Parents

Several suggestions for parents resulted from this study:

1. Get to know your child’s school counselor. Through this study you can learn about parents’ expectations of school counselors.
2. As a parent, know your expectations of the school counselor. Ask your child’s school counselor to be attentive to your child’s needs and to provide information and knowledge to you and your child.

3. Become informed about your school counselor's role and function. Review information sent out by the school system and your school in particular about what your school counselor's role is.
4. Make contact with your child's school counselor and introduce yourself. If your counselor has a relationship with you and your child the school counselor will be more likely to keep you informed.
5. Maintain the contact frequently to gain information and knowledge of things that involve your student. This can be accomplished by reviewing your school's website to look for guidance and counseling related workshops or events.
6. Know your child's needs- whether academic, career, or personal in nature and how your child's school counselor could help. Counselors are the ones who write recommendations letters and provide references for employers, military, and colleges. Counselors can provide more helpful information if they know your child and their needs. Maintain contact with the school counselor throughout their high school years and update them about your student's needs.
7. Encourage your child to get to know and develop a personal relationship with their school counselor. Do this from day one and continue the encouragement throughout high school. Encourage your child to make contact frequently with the school counselor and perhaps get them involved in guidance related or volunteer activities.
8. Encourage your child to go to the school counselor with questions regularly. When your student asks question about classes, college, careers or problems offer the school counselor as a resource. As a parent, make appointments with your child to visit the

school counselor so that your child knows you are invested in their education and that you value their school counselor.

### Implications for School Counselors

1. First, know what your parents expect of school counselors. Parents want school counselors to be available, communicate, provide information and knowledge, assist with transitional planning, and provide counseling and referrals. Most importantly parents want school counselor to know their students.
2. Parents want communication. Provide parents with information on the school counselor website and/or newsletters that informs them of graduation requirements, sol testing and requirements and upcoming events. Keep parents informed in multiple ways. Consider setting up email blasts where parents who would be willing to get email communication can be informed periodically on important information.
3. Analyze and look at your school counseling program. Provide information to parents about the school counselor role and function. Keep parents informed about your areas of knowledge and areas of expertise.
4. Know what you have in place to attempt to get to know students on an individual basis. Look for ways to provide for more individualized services perhaps multiple times per year. Look for ways to reach out to students and to educate students on what you can help with, your training, and expertise.
5. Implement effective methods to encourage parents to be involved. More parent in-services, perhaps offered at various times. (Breakfast meetings, brown bag lunch talks, evening meetings etc...)

5. As a school counselor, know your expectations and values. Monitor how close your expectations and values match up with parents. Since we know that parents and school counselors share values, use this information to promote the school counseling program.
6. Educate and inform parents about those “barriers” that prevent maximum time from being spent with their child. Advertise when sol’s are being given, list the school counselors and the number of students per counselor, and provide a listing of duties for each counselor.
7. Consider school counselor availability. Consider having a school counselor work an altered schedule to be available for parents who work normal business hours.
8. Encourage parents to schedule appointments periodically with the school counselor to gain knowledge and information about academic classes, scholarships, college applications, and transitional planning. Invite parents into the school and offer programs designed for their participation.
9. As a school counselor, be aware of the resources available to provide parents and students in need of professional help. Advertise these resources in the guidance office or in a place that is accessible for parents.
10. Become familiar with expectancy theory and how it can be applied to parental expectations. Know what parents value in the school counselor program. Parents are motivated by their child’s needs. Work with parents to identify their students’ needs. When parents believe their child can be successful parents will be more motivated to work with the school counselor.

11. Expectancy theory maintains that parents consciously choose behaviors based on perceptions and interactions to expectations. In order to encourage and promote motivation school counselors should create new experiences with parents which may change their expectations and improve the motivation for both the school counselor and parent to work together.
12. Most importantly, do your best to get to know your students. When school counselors know their students they are better able to guide the child and to best meet their individual needs. This is also helpful when advocating for a student. The better you know your student, the more insight you will have in assisting the student.

#### Implications for Administrators

Suggestions for school counselors working with administrators:

1. Administrators need to be aware of ASCA roles and parents expectations. ASCA provides a model for school counselor expectations and parents also have their own set of expectations. It is essential that administrators have a good understanding of both when considering roles, functions, and responsibilities of the school counselor. School counselors can provide education to administration about roles and informal surveys can be conducted to hear from parents about their expectations.
2. Parents and school counselors must voice what their expectations are and what their shared values are. Counselors can work with administrators on developing ideas on the best ways to meet these expectations. By doing this together, school counselors can gain the administrative support needed to carry it out.
3. School counselors can encourage administrators to promote their job duties and responsibilities and provide clear boundaries. Counselors need to be able to focus on

getting to know their students and on counseling related tasks. Administrators need to ensure that counselors are performing counseling duties and that non-counseling related duties are assigned to other paraprofessionals.

#### Implications for the School Board

Several suggestions for the school board resulted from this study:

1. Encourage school board members to become familiar with ASCA model and have a thorough understanding of school counselor roles and functions.
2. Educate school board members about parent expectations and provide members with information of how school counselors plan to meet those expectations.
3. Provide school board members with data that shows the amount of time that school counselors spend testing students (sol's). Provide members with the counselor student ratio and educate members on the barriers that exist that prevent school counselors from getting to know their students. Encourage school board members to allocate money for additional school counselors to meet the needs of parents and students.

#### Implications for Counselor Educators

1. Educate counseling students on the expectations identified by parents in this study.
2. Educate counseling students about expectancy theory and how expectations are formed through experiences and how parental influences can motivate parents and students to work with the school counselor.
3. Educate students on the barriers that prevent school counselors from meeting parent expectations.
4. Encourage students to reach out to parents and other stakeholders in education to learn what expectations they have of school counselors and programs.

## Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be considered when interpreting results and planning future investigations. First, the focus groups selected for interviews were identified by either the PTSO president or an administrator of the school. In addition, parents of the focus groups were mainly parents of 12<sup>th</sup> graders but representation included at least one parent of each grade level. Parents who participated in the focus groups stated that their students were academic achievers (students who made mostly A, B & C's). Parents of students who are not experiencing academic success may have different perceptions. Parents who participated in the PESQC were mainly parents of 9, 10, and 11th graders. Only a small number of actual 12<sup>th</sup> grade parents participated. This was due to one day registration only being for those students who were in grades 9-11. Parents of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students were captured only if they had a sibling or were assisting with registration. Approximately 15% of the 350 parent participants were parents of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Other possible limitations were those parents who participated in the focus groups may have been influenced by their group members or may have felt pressured to answer in a particular way based on the nature of other group participant responses. Group influences could be a good thing or a bad thing. As a facilitator of the group there is always the question of whether members feel that they are able to speak freely. Also, focus groups were conducted at night. This appeared to be a good time for working adults but it is a possibility that results could be different if parents were interviewed at a time when they were not working- feeling more rested.

Participants in the focus groups only represented one cultural background. Participants who completed the PESQC represented at least four cultural backgrounds. An advantage of replicating this study would be to look at a greater geographical range of parents to make this

study more generalizable. The focus groups were only conducted in two high schools and the PESCQ took place in two other high schools. Increasing the geographic representation would be recommended to increase the studies validity and reliability.

Additionally, some questions on the PESCQ were not answered by parents. This may have occurred because of lack of time or parents may have needed more time to consider the answer. Parents completed the survey during the registration process or immediately following it.

Finally, data were collected during or after the registration process which may have influenced the responses. Due to the limited time of registration appointments and what needs to be accomplished during that time, parents may have felt a sense of urgency to complete the survey without a lot of time to process the questionnaire. Other parents didn't complete one due to wanting to be finished with the registration process or the need to return to work or prior engagements.

#### Future Research

Recommendations for future research concerning parental expectation of secondary counselors are as follows. First, researchers might replicate this study on parental expectations to assess difference in findings among parental expectations of elementary school counselors and middle school counselors.

Other researchers may have suggestions or recommendations for improvement of the focus group interview protocol or the questionnaire. Replication and evaluation of the instruments would help improve their validity and reliability.

Although validity for the PESCQ was found to be high due to confirmation of findings from the focus groups; validity could be improved qualitatively by performing member checking of

the final results with participants. Quantitatively, the PESCQ when re-administered can be compared to this research study and the results and scores can be discussed relating to reliability.

Also, future researchers may want to repeat focus groups and surveys at other schools with larger numbers in order to increase the amount of data collected. Repeating this with a larger sample of parents representing diverse groups and setting would also make the results more generalizable. It would also be interesting to see if there were differences among the demographic variables since schools and grade levels produced no significant results.

Researchers may also want to do parent focus groups with parents whose students are performing poorly. It would be interesting to see if their expectations of school counselors are the same as those identified by the two parent focus groups in the study.

Further research could also include providing focus groups and questionnaires to students, teachers, and school counselors. School counselors and teachers could be surveyed to find out what their expectations are of school counselors. This could provide beneficial information in each school when looking at the school counseling program. Learning about school counselors expectations may also prove to be beneficial since they are the main ones guiding students through out the high school years.

Another possibility would be for future researchers to complete the survey at another time in the year where parents may have had more time to consider each question. Email surveys or a mass mailing may be an additional option. In addition, researchers could consider a section on the survey for comments to allow parents to provide additional information. Parents in the focus groups had this opportunity but those completing the PESCQ had minimal room to do this and it was at the request of the school counseling administration to keep the survey to a minimum due to the time factor.

Finally, even if parent's expectations are currently being met, school counselors need this feedback in order to improve what they do and how they do it. School counselors need to gain this knowledge to incorporate ways to encourage parent involvement in order to meet the needs of students and the expectations of parents. Due to the lack of research in parental expectations it is essential that this area be addressed and since it is evident that parents have expectations, it seems very important to survey those who have those expectations on a regular basis.

### Summary

Chapter five included a discussion of the findings of the qualitative and quantitative findings of this study. This study produced new data about what parents expect of secondary school counselors. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected confirming what parents expect of secondary school counselors. Discussion of the limitations of the study were included, followed by sections providing implications for parents, school counselors, administrators, school board and further research.

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## APPENDIX A: Informed Consent

**Title of Project:** Parental Expectations of School Counselors

**Investigator:** Shawn D. Hughes, Doctoral Candidate for Virginia Tech, 835 Duke of Gloucester Street Roanoke, VA 24014, (540)353-0101

### **I. Purpose:**

The purpose of this project is to explore parental expectations of high school counselor's roles and to gain an understanding of how expectancy theory influences parental motivation.

### **II. Procedures:**

The first phase of this project includes parent focus groups. Parents will be interviewed by the researcher for approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will be audiotaped and transcriptions will be completed. The interview will consist of open ended questions. Questions are designed to gain knowledge of parental expectations of secondary school counselors. This knowledge will be used in the development of a parental expectation questionnaire. In the second phase of research, a larger sample of parents will be asked to complete the parental expectation school counselor questionnaire. Those who are asked to participate in focus groups will not be asked to participate in the second phase of this project which is the survey.

### **III. Risks and Benefits:**

There are no more than minimal risks involved in participating in this project. Participants will contribute to the knowledge of all stakeholders, (counselors, teachers, administrators, school districts). At the end of the focus group/interview parents will have the option to debrief with the focus group moderator if needed.

### **IV. Anonymity and Confidentiality:**

No participant will be identified by name or any other personal identifier. Participants will use pseudonyms for themselves, schools, school districts, and school counselors. All results to this study will be kept confidential. A person who has been briefed about procedures for ensuring confidentiality will transcribe interviews. Only those directly involved in data analysis will have access to interview transcripts. Transcripts will be stored in a secure place and will be identified and stored by a code. Tapes will be destroyed at the end of this research.

### **V. Compensation:**

There is a small compensation that will be given to parents for participating. Pizza will be provided for the parent focus groups.

### **VI. Freedom to Withdraw:**

Participants are free to withdraw at any time from this investigation. Participants are free not to respond to any questions in the interview or questionnaire.

**VII. Informed Consent:**

Participants will receive a copy of the consent form prior to the interview and asked to indicate agreement with the stated conditions.

**VIII. Approval of Research:**

This research project has been approved, as required by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human subjects at Virginia Tech.

**IX. Participants' Responsibilities:**

I voluntarily agree to participate in this project.

**X. Participant's Permission:**

I have read and understand the Informed Consent Form for Participants and the conditions of this project. I voluntarily agree to participate in this project. I have had the opportunity to have questions about this project answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent to participate in this project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Should you have questions about this research project, contact the investigator listed at the top of this form or Dr. David Moore, IRB Chair, Research Compliance Office, 540-231-4991, [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

APPENDIX B: Pilot Interview Protocol  
Parental Expectations

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Introduction:

Thanks you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I will be audio-recording this interview. The purpose of the interview is to explore parental expectations of secondary school counselor's roles and to gain an understanding of what influences and motivates those expectations. Parental expectations are defined as work related roles that parents perceive that school counselors should perform. The answers from the focus groups will be combined and the researcher will look for common themes from parents. Nothing that you say will be identified by you personally. To maintain confidentiality during this interview, please take a minute to choose a pseudonym. Also, please use pseudonyms for schools, school districts, or school counselors. Please tell me what you have chosen for yourself as a pseudonym. In addition, to maintain your confidentiality any other personal identifier, such as proper names, will be removed from the transcripts.

As we progress through the interview, please feel free to ask any questions that you may have. Just ask me to stop. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the informed consent that you signed or the interview process?

Interview Questions: This pilot study will be looking at parental expectations and what motivates these expectations.

- As you reflect about the job of a high school counselor, what roles and responsibilities do you think the school counselor should perform?
- Specifically, of those roles and responsibilities you mentioned, which do you value most as a parent? Which do you value least?
- What do you believe are the values that both you and the school counselor share regarding your son or daughter?
- Are they asked to do too much? Not enough?
- What do/can you expect to gain as a parent when working with a school counselor?
- What does/can your son/daughter expect to gain from working with a school counselor?
- What barriers prevent school counselors from meeting parent expectations?
- What do you think are unrealistic expectations?

- Can you describe a particular experience or interaction (positive or negative) you have had with your high school counselor?
- Based on that experience or previous interaction, do you see any relationship between those experiences and your expectations of school counselors?
- Do parents because of their expectations encourage their students to see their school counselor?
- Based on your experiences, how can school counselors be more effective in interactions with parents.
- What kind of advice or encouragement have you given to your child regarding working with the school counselor? (If none, why?)
- In what way do you think your previous experiences played a role in whether or not you encouraged your child to seek out a counselor?
- In what way do you think your expectation of what a counselor's role is, played a part in whether or not you encouraged your child to seek out the counselor?
- Can you name your child's counselor? Number of times you have had contact with the counselor?
- That covers the questions for this interview. Is there anything else you would like to add this year?
- Off all of the roles and functions you have heard described tonight, what would be at the top of your list as the most important role of a high school counselor?
- I would like to take a minute to look at this process with you. How did you feel about the questions as far as clarity? What other feedback would be helpful for me to know in order to improve this process and these interview questions?

Thanks for sharing your knowledge and perspective as a parent. I appreciate your time.

## APPENDIX C: Phone Contact Form

I am contacting you to ask if you would be willing to participate in a research study conducted by a school counselor named Shawn Hughes. This study will require you to meet with other parents in a focus group at a designated time for a period of 90 minutes. This focus group only requires one session. Dinner will be provided. I think as a parent of our high school that you can provide tremendous insight that we need into parental expectations of school counselors. I would greatly appreciate your participation. We are excited about the results from this research. Results from this research will be provided to the school districts upon request.

Sincerely,

Administrator/Researcher

#### APPENDIX D: Cover Letter Focus Group

Professional school counselors are called on to serve students, parents, teachers, administrators and other professionals in the community often simultaneously, and often with different expectations. Parents are the most important stakeholder, however, we need to have a better understanding of what you expect of school counselors and what motivates those expectations.

Your opinion in this matter is very important in having a more accurate understanding of parental expectations. You have been chosen by administration and/or the guidance office to participate in a parent focus group. Your input into this study is essential to providing the best possible services to you as parents and to your student. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate.

The group will be held on \_\_\_\_\_ at 6pm at the following location \_\_\_\_\_. The researcher gathering this data is an experienced school counselor. Dinner will be provided for you. Please expect this session to last approximately 90 minutes.

Attached you will find an informed consent which outlines the purposes of this study. Please read the information and sign the consent. If you have questions, please ask.

The results of this research will be made available to school counselors in your district. You may receive a summary of results by contacting me. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have. Thanks for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Shawn D. Hughes, LPSC, LPC  
540-353-0101  
Shughes0203@yahoo.com

## APPENDIX E: Parental Expectation Demographics

Please answer the following information. These questions along with the information gained from focus groups will be used for research purposes only. The information will not be used for individual identification purposes.

Parent Demographics: Circle the answer.

1. Gender? male or female

2. Student lives with: both parents    one parent    parent/step-parent    grandparents  
relative    other (please explain)\_\_\_\_\_

3. How many children do you currently have enrolled in high school?

one                      two                      three                      four

4. Do you have a son/daughter that has graduated from high school?

yes                      no

5. I am a parent of a current student who participates in the following: Please circle all that apply. If more than one student, circle all that apply:

Extra Curricular Activities    Athletics    ESL    Special Education

Transfer between schools (within last year)    Governor's School

Free Lunch    504 Plan    Music/Drama

6. My student has performed in what grade range in the past year: Please circle your response. For more than one student circle the letter and add 1, 2, or three.

A                      B                      C                      D                      F

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7. How many contacts have you had with your child's school counselor within the last calendar year? Circle number for each child.

0      1      2      3      4      5      more

8. How many school counselors has your child had during grades 9-12 including your current counselor?

0      1      2      3      4      5      more      don't know

9. What grade is your student in? If more than 1 student circle additional number or same number twice.

9<sup>th</sup>                  10<sup>th</sup>                  11<sup>th</sup>                  12<sup>th</sup>

## APPENDIX F: Parental Expectations Survey

The purpose of this survey is to study what parents expect of school counselors and what motivates those expectations. Your opinion in this matter is very important in having a more accurate understanding of parental expectations. The questionnaire has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Office at VT and granted "exempt status." Completing this survey implies your consent to participate in this study. The information gained will be used for research purpose only. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Please do not put your name on this questionnaire. Return the questionnaire to the person handing them out and pick up a token of our appreciation.

Sincerely,

Shawn D. Hughes, LPSC, LPC  
(540)353-0101  
shughes0203@yahoo.com

## APPENDIX G

**Parental Expectation School Counselor Questionnaire (PESCO)**

The purpose of this survey is to study what parents expect of school counselors and what motivates those expectations. Your opinion in this is very important in our understanding of parental expectations. The questionnaire has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Office at VT and granted "exempt status." Completing this survey implies your consent to participate in this study. The information gained will be used for research purposes only. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. **Please do not put your name on this questionnaire.** Return the questionnaire to the person handing them out and pick up a token of our appreciation.

**Instructions:** Please place a check mark in the box under numbers 1 through 4, or Not Applicable, for each item.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1	2	3	4	N/A

**I expect my child's school counselor to.....**

	1	2	3	4	N/A
1a. Be available to me & communicate with me through phone, email, meetings, & written information such as testing dates and timelines					
1b. Help my child choose classes and assist with their academic schedule, testing, and understanding of graduation requirements					
1c. Assist my child with transition planning to work or college & assist my child with college applications and scholarships					
1d. Know my child personally, guide my child, and be attentive to my child's needs throughout my child's high school years					
1e. Provide individual counseling as needed and provide referrals when indicated					
1f. Advocate for my child (with teachers, parents, & administrators)					
1g. Meet with my child regularly both individually and in groups to provide information to them beginning in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade					

**As a parent, I expect my child to gain the following from working with the school counselor:**

	1	2	3	4	N/A
2a. Information and knowledge (scholarships, financial aide, graduation requirements, colleges and other opportunities)					
2b. Guidance in making choices about colleges and academic classes					
2c. Problem solving skills					
2d. Transitional information from high school to work or college					

**To what extent do you believe the following interfere with school counselors being able to meet parent expectations:**

	1	2	3	4	N/A
3a. Too many students on school counselor's case load					
3b. Testing (SOL's)					
3c. Not enough time – too many non-counseling related duties					

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1	2	3	4	N/A

Please rate the following for the influence in why you, or your child, work with the school counselor.

	1	2	3	4	N/A
4a. My child's school counselor is important to my student's success					
4b. Because of my expectations, I encourage my child to see their school counselor					
4c. As a parent, I am motivated by the needs of my child to work with the school counselor					
4d. My own personal expectations with the school counselor when I was in school were met					

Please circle your answer to the following questions. If you have more than one child, please circle all applicable answers.

5. How many different school counselors has your child had during grades 9 – 12 including your current counselor?

0      1      2      3      4      5      more

6. How many contacts have you had with your child's school counselor within the last calendar year? (January 2006-January 2007)

0      1      2      3      4      5      more

	Yes	No	Unsure
7a. Has your child seen the school counselor within the last calendar year?			
7b. Have you received written information from your child's school counselor at home?			
7c. Do you know the name of your child's assigned school counselor(s)?			
7d. Have you spoken to your child's school counselor(s) within the last calendar year? (January 2006-January 2007)			

8. Overall how satisfied are you with the services your son or daughter receives from his/her school counselor? (Please circle one option)

Very Dissatisfied      Somewhat Dissatisfied      Somewhat Satisfied      Very Satisfied

Please tell us a little about yourself.

9. Your gender:      male      or      female

10. Do you have a son/daughter that has graduated from high school in Virginia?      yes      no

11. How many children do you currently have enrolled in high school?  
1      2      3      Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. What grade is your son or daughter in? (Circle all that apply)      9      10      11      12

13. How long have you lived in Roanoke County?      Less than 1 year      1-3years      4-6 years      more

14. What is your race?      Caucasian      Hispanic      Asian      African American      Other

**Thank you for taking the time to share your perspective!**

## APPENDIX H: Focus Group Data

1a. Be available, communicate through phone, email, meetings, & provide written information such as testing dates and timelines

- particularly availability some seniors are not on campus and have a lot going on so I think there may need to be an extra effort for those kids
- written stuff needs to go home to the parents
- I'm a written person and I keep a school file I have often wanted a timeline, a suggested timeline written down when SAT's are taken and when deadlines are due. Written info that is mailed to the parent.
- communication-because that's the person I expected to be able to tell me about the scheduling
- out of the big list of stuff that's sent home...scholarship stuff isn't in it and we have had a prior child go through this whole process before
- I'd like to have information in the Jr. year
- phone call to parents introducing self or giving email-a welcoming call
- we send a newsletter home and we send the final grades home...I have often wanted a timeline, a suggested timeline written down, when SAT's are generally taken and when the deadlines are due and how the process works because it is hard to maneuver.
- making sure they're not missing dates to sign up for SAT's
- newsletters are 20 pages long but we might miss some of it

1b. Help my child choose classes and assist with their academic schedule, testing, and understanding of graduation requirements

- I'd like to have school counselors looking at their academic life, their classes.
- a counselor is responsible for your schedule
- academic needs are huge
- helping with course selection and making sure they are on track
- for the diploma that they think they're working towards
- course selection fits career goals
- testing for special education
- prerequisites

1c. Assist my child with transition planning to work or college and assist my child with college applications and scholarships

- I think the school counselor and student should sit and talk about their career goals, their college aspirations and scholarships
- processing college applications
- helping them select a college that best fits their needs
- working with them on all of the requirements that go into making the college applications
- career goals
- career goals and ability
- for the great many students that aren't going to college, I think a counselor could help them-should be able to help them transition into a career
- guiding the child towards finding the proper college that meets their needs

-career aspirations

1d. Know my child personally, guide my child, and be attentive to my child's needs throughout my child's high school years

-I want attentive people attending to my child

-to know the student individually, which I guess is a huge task to try to undertake, but I think so much gets lost. If perhaps there was a counselor that knew this child a little better...

-“I have had three kids and each one of them is different and they had three different counselors and each one of them knew them well enough to, I feel like, be attentive to their needs. So, when my son kept trying to drop out of Spanish and I told him, “No, you have to take Spanish” she wouldn't let him do it. She made him call me; but, when my daughter came in and said, “You know, that physics class is just not hard enough for me, I need a different class.” She let that student switch out of one class and go into another one because she- I think that is attentive to their needs, so I have a third one who goes in and she's got it all worked out and she knows when the classes are offered and who's teaching them and who's in the class and she goes in with her counselor, knowing that I support that, and she lets her do that. So, I do think school counselors need to be attentive to students needs. I just don't think that you can do this job without being responsive to what the child brings to the situation.”

-know the kids better- have a more personal relationship and sit down and get to know the kids and know what their goal are

1e. Provide individual counseling as needed and provide referrals when indicated

-counselors have to deal with kids that are highly unmotivated and then you get into emotional needs and I know there's behavioral problems that school counselors have to deal with...that's not what I'm looking for but kids have to be able to go to the counselor if they are not getting it in the classroom

-school counselors need to be able to refer when a child is in crisis for some reason

-helping a child that's having a problem, directing to right resource

-personal counseling

-individual counseling

1f. Advocate for my child (with teachers, parents, & administrators)

-I really expect the guidance counselor to kind of serve as a buffer between what's going on in the administrative part of the school and the student and this year there were alot of changes in the way things were scheduled, and you know, you think about counselors, a counselor is responsible for your schedule.

-communicator between student, teachers, and admin about concerns

-different students have different needs and some of its going to be personal...college, being visible

1g. Meet with my child regularly both individually and in groups to provide information to them beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade

- I have a freshman and a senior-starting in 9<sup>th</sup> grade regular meetings and helping students develop goals or gain more information
- not only should they interact on a regular basis, but I think it should be a scheduled basis that they would sit and talk about career goals, their college aspirations
- meet with students, seminars, forums, etc.

## APPENDIX I

*Analytical Matrix of Parental Expectations from Parent Focus Groups*

Coding	Sally	Curly	Goldie	Susie	Sue	Ginger	Fantasia	Faith	Dana	Bionce'	Beth	George	Julie	Jessica	Anne
Be available, communicate provide information		X	X	X	X	X							X		
Transitional planning	X	X			X			X	X	X		X			X
Know my child	X	X	X	X		X				X	X	X		X	X
Individual counseling	X	X		X		X			X			X			

## APPENDIX J

*Parents Expectation of Child Gains*

Focus Group	Dana	Beth	Bionce	Jessica	George	Goldie	Susie	Faith	Ginger	Curly
Gain Information/ Knowledge		X	X		X	X				X
Gain Guidance in Making Choices Colleges/ Academics	X			X	X				X	
Gain Transitional Planning					X		X	X		

